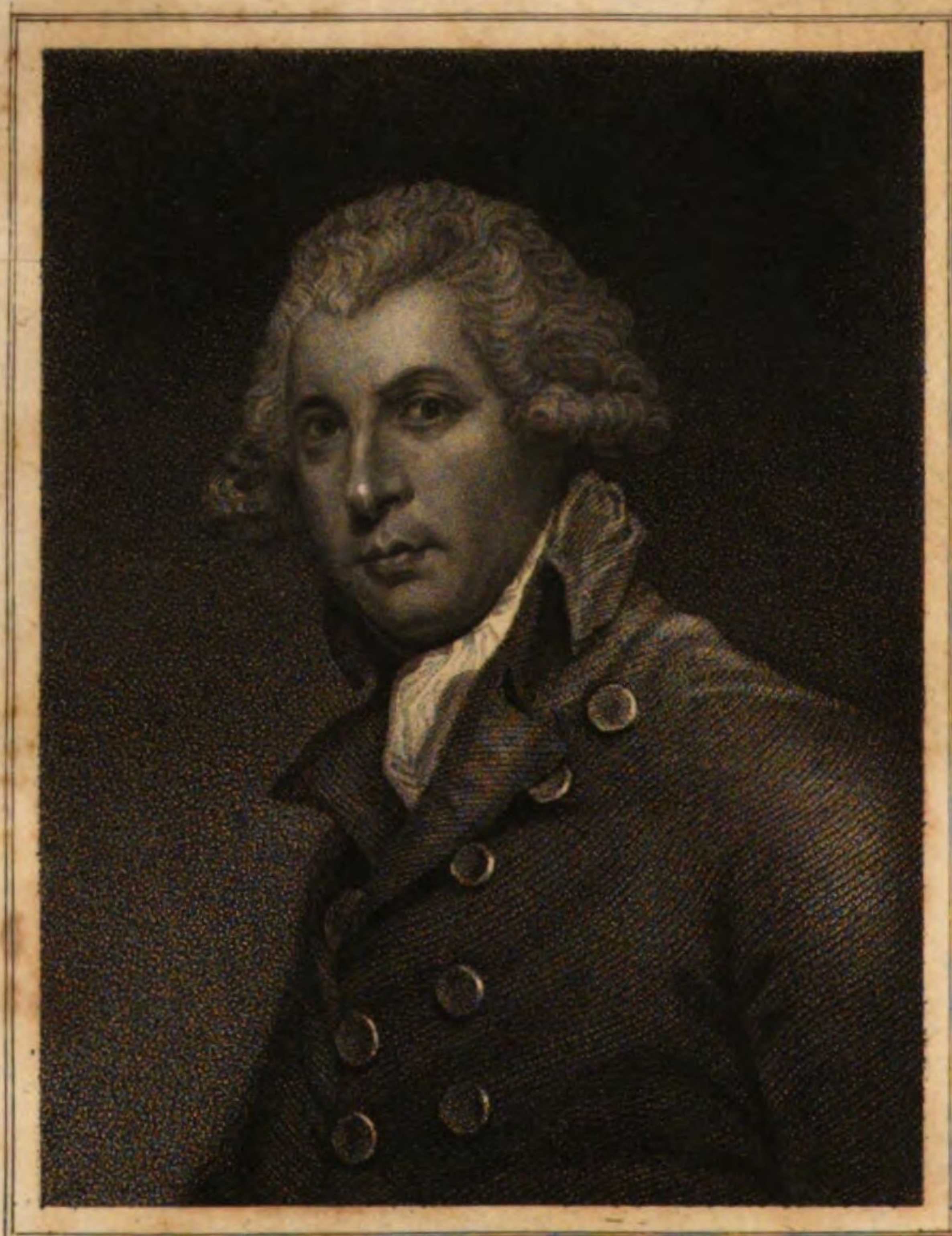


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THE RIGHT HONORABLE
RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

Published Nov^r 1816. by P. Martin Oxford Street. corner of Orchard Street.

SPEECHES

OF THE LATE

Right Honourable

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

(SEVERAL CORRECTED BY HIMSELF.)

EDITED BY

A CONSTITUTIONAL FRIEND.

VOL. I.

London :

PRINTED FOR PATRICK MARTIN, CORNER OF ORCHARD-
STREET, OXFORD-STREET.

1816.

B. 487 ^y/₁



Richard Brinsley Sheridan

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A CONSTITUTIONAL FRIEND

VOL. I

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. SMITH AND CO. KING STREET, SEVEN DIALS.

STREET, OXFORD-STREET.

1818.

in 267 Hb.

Advertisement.

No exertion has been spared to collect and arrange accurate accounts of every speech delivered by the late Mr. Sheridan ; and those efforts proving successful, it may boldly be asserted, that pages more abounding with brilliant wit, depth, solidity, and sound argument, have never been presented to the public. Many of these speeches have been candidly admitted, by all parties, to exhibit every oratorical effect the human mind is capable of suggesting ; but as Mr. Sheridan possessed, in a most extraordinary manner, the power of giving, by the happy turns of his wit, interest to subjects of the dryest and dullest nature ; it has been considered that the public should be in possession, not only of those which are most celebrated, but of every speech and opinion that could be collected.

To those parliamentary friends of Mr. Sheridan, who, on this occasion, have voluntarily favored the Editor with communications and assistance, the thanks of the country are due, inasmuch that they have enabled him to record the public sentiments, during a period of thirty years, of one of the most brilliant and accomplished senators who ever sat in the British house of parliament.

August 19th, 1816.

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SPEECHES

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

NOVEMBER 20, 1780.

In the General Election of 1780, Mr. Sheridan was returned for Stafford, upon which occasion a Petition was presented to the House, complaining of an undue Election, and containing a charge of Bribery and Corruption against the sitting Members for that Borough.

MR. SHERIDAN rose and complained, that it was in the power of any petitioner to bring a charge of crimes and misdemeanors against any members of that house with impunity. Where it is alleged that an election is undue on account of informalities, or upon certain points of law or custom, the character and feelings of the member against whom such a petition is brought, receive no hurt; but the case is otherwise where an accusation is brought of bribery and corruption; crimes so high in the eye of the laws and constitution of this country. He therefore expressed a wish that some gentleman, of greater experience in parliament and consequence than himself, would devise some method of preventing frivolous and malicious petitions;

and of punishing their authors suitably to the nature of their offences. It was very hard that a gentleman should lie under the imputation of crimes of which he was innocent, for a whole year, perhaps for a longer period. He observed also, that under such circumstances, every member who had been fairly and independently elected, must feel equally for the credit of his constituents, from whom he derived his trust, and whose character, as well as interest, it was his duty to defend: that it certainly was a most serious hardship, that upon the accusation of a few of the lowest and most unprincipled voters in any borough, a numerous and respectable body should remain traduced and stigmatized in the eyes of that house, for the space of a year, in a petition which should at last be proved a gross and groundless libel. He therefore hoped that some gentlemen of more experience than himself, would turn their thoughts towards providing some just and adequate remedy to this evil, and some exemplary penalties, whenever charges of so gross a nature are preferred on frivolous grounds, and with unfair purposes. [He was heard with particular attention, the house being uncommonly still while he was speaking.]

Mr. Rigby agreed with the honorable gentleman in the justness of his complaint. He afterwards, however, thought proper to attempt to ridicule the idea of any member's being concerned for the character of his constituents; and to throw out some insinuations against the burgesses of Stafford.

Mr. Fox observed, that though these ministerial members, who chiefly robbed and plundered their constituents, might afterwards affect to despise them, yet gentlemen, who felt properly the nature of the trust allotted to them, would always treat them and speak of them with respect. He then alluded to the late member for Stafford, Mr. W. and drew a comparison between him and his

honorable friend S. not very much to the credit of the former, &c. &c.

Mr. Rigby thought, that all such matters were to be judged of in the committees. It was very hard to lie under the suspicion of such enormities as bribery and corruption. He pitied poor Stafford; but poor Stafford must endure suspicion, and even imputation, for a time!

Mr. Fox supported Mr. Sheridan; and at length the Speaker reminded the house that there was no question before them.

NOVEMBER 27.

THANKS TO EARL CORNWALLIS, AND GENERAL
SIR HENRY CLINTON.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that Mr. Coke had expressed an earnest desire that this motion might pass unanimously, though he knew that there were in that house different descriptions of men, who could not assent to a vote that seemed to imply a recognition or approbation of the American war. If so many were to be included in this vote of thanks, why exclude any who had an equal title to the applause of the house, with those particularized in the motion? Why not thank General Prevost, for example, for his victory over the enemy at Savannah? a victory that had laid the foundation of the success at Charles Town, and which led the way to that at Camden?

He hoped that a motion would not be objected to, to thank General Prevost, that the victory gained by him was a victory only over the French. Mr. Sheridan asked farther, why the thanks of the house had not been voted to Sir Henry Clinton, immediately on the arrival of the success at Charles Town? And what must be the feelings of that general officer, when he reflected that the thanks

of the house were voted to him only in consequence of a resolution to thank Earl Cornwallis?

Mr. Sheridan apologized to Mr. Rigby for not answering some things that had fallen from him, in the same ludicrous strain, in which he chose to view every thing, excepting what related immediately to his own interest. In his own opinion, there were some things too serious for ridicule; and the question before them, if ever any question did, merited a serious and grave discussion. He acknowledged the honorable gentleman had a fund of drollery and humour; but he liked his ingenuity, his humour, and his counsels, better than his political arguments.

The motion was carried without a division.

FEBRUARY 26.

SECOND READING OF THE BILL FOR THE BETTER REGULATION OF HIS MAJESTY'S CIVIL LIST REVENUE; AND FOR ABOLISHING SEVERAL USELESS, EXPENSIVE, AND INCONVENIENT PLACES; AND FOR APPLYING THE MONIES ARISING THEREFROM TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

Mr. Courtenay having ridiculed the conduct of the opposition members, in a speech of some length, and in which he observed that O liberty! O virtue! O my country! has been the incessant pathetic, but fallacious cry of former oppositions; the present, he was sure, acted on purer motives. They wept over their bleeding country; yet the "patriot eye, in a fine phrenzy rolling," deigned to cast a wishful squint on riches and honors enjoyed by the minister and his venal supporters. If he were not apprehensive of hazarding a ludicrous allusion (which he knew was always improper on a serious subject) he would compare their conduct to the sentimental alderman's in one of Hogarth's prints, who, when his daughter is expiring, wears indeed a parental face of grief and solicitude, but it is to secure her diamond ring, which he is drawing gently from her finger.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose and reprehended Mr. Courtenay for turning every thing that passed into

ridicule; and for having introduced into the house a stile of reasoning, in his opinion, every way unsuitable to the gravity and importance of the subjects that came under their discussion. If they could not act with dignity, he thought they might at least debate with decency. Mr. Sheridan said, he would not attempt to answer Mr. Courtenay's arguments, for it was impossible seriously to reply to what, in every part, had an infusion of ridicule in it. Two of the honorable gentleman's similies, however, he must take notice of. The one was, his having insinuated that opposition was envious of those who basked in court sunshine; and desirous merely to get into their places. He begged leave to remind the honorable gentleman, that though the sun afforded a genial warmth, it also occasioned an intemperate heat, that tainted and infected every thing it reflected on. That this excessive heat tended to corrupt as well as to cherish; to putrify as well as to animate; to dry and soke up the wholesome juices of the body politic; and turn the whole of it into one mass of corruption. If those therefore, who sat near him, did not enjoy so genial a warmth as the honorable gentleman, and those who like him kept close to the noble lord in the blue ribbon, he was certain they breathed a purer air, an air less infected and less corrupt. Another of the honorable gentleman's allusions was not quite a new one—he had talked of the machine of state, and of the drag-chain of opposition. He would only observe upon this, that a drag-chain was never applied but when a machine was going down hill, and then it was applied wisely. As to any thing else the gentleman had said, he should not offer a reply; but should sit down with assuring the honorable gentleman, that the most serious part of his argument appeared to him to be the most ludicrous.

MARCH 5.

**MR. SHERIDAN'S MOTIONS FOR THE BETTER
REGULATION OF THE POLICE OF WEST-
MINSTER.**

Mr. SHERIDAN now rose, agreeably to his intimation, to offer his propositions respecting the police of Westminster. He began with saying, that if he had presumed to offer his sentiments to the house on this subject at the opening of parliament, he should have felt the necessity of apologizing for the presumption of taking up the matter; since after the recollection of the dreadful tumults which ravaged and disgraced the metropolis in the month of June last, he should have naturally conceived that some gentleman, of more experience and more weight than himself, would have thought it worthy his own attention, as well as that of the house. But as so long a time had elapsed, and no gentleman undertaken the important consideration, he thought himself both justified and called upon to the task. The police of every country was an object of importance. (Gentlemen would understand what he meant by the term police; it was not an expression of our law, or of our language; but was perfectly understood.) In a despotic country, where the laws were regulated by the will of the sovereign, the view and purpose of the police is to give comfort and security to the subject, and, perhaps, to furnish secret information to the rulers. In a constitution of liberty, like that of Britain, it was the duty and the object of the people to prefer the essentials of freedom, to the comforts of ease; and they were not to purchase internal protection at the expense of slavery. It is not a dead and slavish quiet; it is not a passive calm and submission, that is the ultimate object of police in such a state; but as much good order as is consistent and busy bustling genius of liberty. They were not to be awed into submission by a military, dependent on the will of one man, to whom they de-

legated their power ; nor to constitute a police which only could derive maintenance and effect by the intervention of arms. It was for this purpose, that the legislature of Great Britain prudently and wisely established a military power only for the duration of one year ; or rather they suspended the illegality of the military power for a year. It was for this, that they would intrust no permanent and durable military in the hands of the crown ; but preserved to themselves the security of escape, whenever that military should be misapplied to objects for which it was not designed. The police of Westminster, in its present condition, was wretched and miserable. Its state was too well known to every gentleman who heard him, to require description : its weakness and inefficacy were too severely felt at the late dreadful period, to be depended upon in future. To that we were to ascribe the riots and the outrages that had broke forth in June last ; and which had raged without control for many days. To that we were to ascribe the order which had been issued to the military, to act without waiting for the orders of the civil power. To that we were to ascribe the establishment of military power in this country for four months, and its being extended to every part of the country. It was the police of Westminster that had given rise to all these calamities and alarms ; and yet not one measure had been taken, or attempt made, to correct that police, or to prevent a repetition of the same dangers.

He was aware, that it might be said, that if the negligence and the incapacity of the civil power of Westminster had contributed so much to these evils, the same imputation ought to be thrown upon the magistracy of the City of London ; since the tumults had reigned with equal impunity in that city, and with equal consequences. To this he could only say, that he could not forget for a moment, that the tumults began in the city of

Westminster ; that there they had their small beginnings ; and that there they might have been checked with less exertion than in the subsequent progress of their accumulating force. But the success of the riots in the city of London, had been ascribed to the want of conduct and courage in the chief magistrate. It was to him, and not to the civil power in general of that city, that the blame was given. By the same mode of reasoning, he would be permitted to say, that if the chief magistrate of the city of London was condemned for not having animated and directed the resistance ; the chief magistrate of the county of Middlesex ought also to be charged with inattention and inactivity in these scenes. If responsibility was to be proportioned to trust, which certainly was the rule and measure of justice, the lord lieutenant of the county of Middlesex was infinitely more criminal and guilty than any other man ; because his obligation and his powers were greater. Invested with the important trust of appointing and regulating the civil power, it was his duty to see that the magistrates and the officers which he had put into the commission, did their duty to their country ; and if they did not, he ought to have collected them together, to have appointed them their stations, and to have put them into active employment. If it should be said that the noble duke could have done no service to the kingdom by such a measure at that moment, because the magistrates were such that they would have disobeyed his orders ; then he would beg leave to ask, why were such magistrates put into the commission ? The crime was equally enormous in either case. If it should be said, that the office of a magistrate in this city was so exceedingly troublesome and offensive, that gentlemen of character and fortune could not be found to enter on it, then he would ask, why had no measures been taken to put the police on a more respectable footing ? and “ after the melancholy experience that

you have had, how comes it nothing has been done since? This is the material question; for after the fatal experience which we have had, it became an indispensable duty of government, and of the officers of the crown, to whom the regulation of the police of Middlesex was intrusted, to prevent the necessity of recurring again to the alarming expedient that had been used in June last. Was not the conduct of that man or men, criminal, who had permitted those justices to continue in the commission? Men of tried inability and convicted depravity! Had no attempt been made to establish some more effectual system of police, in order that we might still depend upon the remedy of the bayonet; and that the military power might be called in to the aid of contrived weakness, and deliberate inattention? It might, perhaps, be the wish of some, that the subject might be familiarised to the use of the soldier; and that, upon occasions less alarming than the last, they might resort again to the same remedy. It was a matter pretty well known, that orders of a nature not dissimilar to those of June last, were given to the military on the acquittal of Lord George Gordon. Orderly serjeants were attending in Westminster Hall;—the courts of Justice were beset with soldiers;—and the guards were all in readiness to act in case of necessity. He did not assert this as an imputation upon government;—he did not say that they ought to have stood by, tame spectators, and beheld the city set on fire, ere they began to act. He only wished to shew from this circumstance, that the weakness of the civil power was recognized by government; that they acknowledged the incapacity, and applied again to the same remedy, unconstitutional as it was, before the necessity was ascertained.

There were only two reasonable excuses that could be assigned for the conduct of government, in issuing the orders that they did to the military power. The first was, they conceived that the

riots were not produced by those men who had assembled around the house, instigated by religious enthusiasm, and impelled by the frenzy of apprehensive zeal; nor yet by a set of vagrants and abandoned characters who had industriously mingled with the original multitude, and taken advantage of the occasion to commit hostilities and depredations on the metropolis; but that they were the effect of a deliberate and deep-laid scheme; a conspiracy, contrived by the enemies of this country, with the intention of spreading plague, pestilence, and famine over this kingdom; to lay the metropolis in ashes; and to strike at the very foundation of our wealth and credit as a nation. If such was the sentiment of government, they might be justified in applying the means which were in their power for destroying the diabolical scheme. If such was the truth, we should have recourse to every expedient;—we should have regiments planted in our churches, picquet guards in our squares, and centinels, instead of watchmen, in our streets. This was the sentiment and the opinion which had been propagated by government, as their excuse and their commendation. A grave and venerable chief justice had pronounced this assertion in the house of peers; and another chief justice had delivered it from the bench; and on this respectable authority, the world are desired to believe, that the whole was a systematic conspiracy of the enemy, levelled at the being and existence of the empire. This was an opinion which, if it was true, would justify the exertions which had been made;—it was at the same time a doctrine which he, for his part, could not consider as just or well founded. Let them search for its truth in the circumstances and probability of the case. What was the conduct of the two houses of parliament on the occasion? Not having been a member of the house at that time, he might for a moment conceive himself to be ignorant of their proceedings. It might naturally be ex-

pected, that if there was an active conspiracy in the metropolis, and war was levied against the person and dignity of the crown, the two houses surely sat from day to day, and day and night, in anxious deliberation; that there were conferences between the two houses, and committees appointed to fathom the plot, and to contrive and direct the means of national salvation. Was this the case? No: on the contrary, the parliament did not meet; or if they did, met in numbers that were unfit for the study of any national question. They adjourned their houses;—they went into the country, and left the conspiracy and the conspirators to the fugitive justices of Middlesex:—they abandoned their country in the moment of danger; even in the hour of attack, they flew from their stations and delivered over the kingdom to the care of those very men, whose criminal negligence and timidity had given strength to the insurrection in its first movements. He would not believe then that parliament concurred with the chief justice in this sentiment; he would not libel them with the accusation, since he could not believe it possible that the house could continue so remiss, so inattentive, and seemingly so ignorant or so careless of the danger, if it had existed. In the house of lords, a noble duke had at that time brought forward a proposition of the utmost importance, especially at such a moment; and there were but nineteen of the hereditary counsellors of the realm to support the right of the subject to carry arms in his own defence. Was this a proof that the empire was threatened with dissolution, by the hostile scheme of the enemy? If the house would peruse the whole of the trials, from that of the first unhappy man who had been brought to the bar at the Old Bailey, to the noble lord who had been tried in the King's Bench, they would find, that the noble lord was the only person who had been charged with high treason. He was both the leader and the army; not one of his subalterns

had risen above the humble charge of felony; and he was the leader and the army in this great machination against the being and the dignity of the state. Forty thousand people were desired by public advertisement, to assemble; and in the same advertisement, the civil officers were also desired to attend to keep the peace. The forty thousand people obeyed the invitation; but the justices and the constables did not. Though it could hardly be believed that so many people could assemble, however pious in their intentions, however orderly in their demeanour, without giving rise to some disturbance, by the interposition of vagabonds, who would take advantage of the occasion; yet the civil officers took no notice of the advertisement. They assembled; and as it was suspected, a multitude of the most abandoned wretches mingled with them, and they pulled down a chapel that night. So weak and untremendous was that mob, that the very chief justice who declared afterwards from the bench, that it was an army levying war against the person and majesty of the crown, took five or six of them with his own hand. Several were taken, and afterwards expiated their offences at the gallows. The day after they were silent and harmless;—a very significant proof of its being no conspiracy; for it was not the nature of a plot to admit of intervals and cessation; its success depended on its rapidity: it would give no leisure for detection and defence—but with closeness it would connect dispatch. When they rose again, they demolished the house of a gentleman, whom he could not better describe than by saying, it was a house that should have fallen by any other storm than that of popular fury. It was then, and not before, that their rage burst out; and they went to pull down and destroy the prisons, as if conscious of their guilt, and knowing that they could find no fit associates for men who had been guilty of such a deed, but in the cells and dungeons, among those wretches who had forfeited

their lives to the laws of their country. In all the trials, in all the proceedings, gentlemen would find no solid and convincing proof of there having been any deep-laid scheme—any regular machination,—any plot against the country in these riots.

The other reason which might justify government for the orders which they issued, was, that they believed the substitution of the military to be a safe, easy, and constitutional measure, in all cases of tumult and riot. He would not attempt to go into any serious investigation of this argument; but only assert, if it were true, that in cases of extreme danger, such a remedy might be safe, easy, and constitutional. Still it would be improper to be acknowledged by parliament; for what might be legally done, would be done oftener. He wished to see a bill of indemnity pass, by which the question would be established on its proper basis; and the people would have the confidence of knowing, that though the late interference was salutary, it was unconstitutional. If he wanted any additional reason to convince him of the danger of leaving such a power in the hands of the crown, a circumstance which occurred in the other house on the opening of the session, would give him the most convincing proof of the necessity of deciding on the doctrine. This was, that His Majesty was praised and exalted for not having acted, in that hour of terror and confusion, like the King of Sweden, in directing his arms against the liberties of the country. This was an expression so alarming in its nature; so threatening and so formidable, that he could not help thinking it incumbent on the house to rescue the country from a suspicion so dreadful. What! was it in His Majesty's power, at that moment, to have trampled on the liberties of the country, and to have introduced military government in the place of the present constitution? Was that the crisis when this might have been established, when the minds of the people were

lost in terror and confusion? No, that was not the moment of danger; the crisis was, when, after the interference of the military power, the chief justice of England said, that it was legal; and asserted, that the military acted not as soldiers, but as citizens; and when this declaration was not objected to by a specific resolution of parliament, but bore the testimony of general acquiescence. That was the moment when the liberties of the people were in danger; and if it did give the opportunity to the crown, the opportunity still existed. It had been asserted, in some instances at least, without a cause, the danger was confined to the metropolis; then, why was the order extended to every part of the kingdom? On granting that it was necessary to extend it, why continue it for four months? If this doctrine was to be laid down, that the crown could give orders to the military to interfere, when, where, and for what length of time it pleases, then we might bid farewell to freedom. If this was the law, we should then be reduced to a military government of the very worst species, in which we should have all the evils of a despotic state, without the discipline or the security. But we were given to understand, that we had the best protection against this evil, in the virtue, the moderation, and the constitutional principles of the sovereign. No man upon earth thought with more reverence than himself, of the virtues and moderation of the sovereign; but this was a species of liberty which he trusted would never disgrace an English soil. The liberty that rested on the virtuous inclinations of any one man, was but suspended despotism; the sword was not indeed upon their necks, but it hung by the small and brittle thread of human will. He adverted to His Majesty's speech from the throne after the riots, which had been peculiarly called His Majesty's own speech; he desired it to be read from the table.

The clerk then read the first part of His Majesty's speech on the 19th of June last, viz.

“ The outrages committed by bands of desperate and abandoned men, in various parts of this metropolis, broke forth with such violence into acts of felony and treason,—had so far overborne all civil authority—and threatened so directly the immediate subversion of all legal power, the destruction of all property, and the confusion of every order in the state; that I found myself obliged by every tie of duty and affection to my people, to suppress, in every part, those rebellious insurrections; and to provide for the public safety, by the most effectual and immediate application of the force intrusted to me by parliament.”

Here, said Mr. Sheridan, His Majesty takes the whole upon himself; and rests the issuing of the order on its true ground—the necessity of the case. If His Majesty's ministers had followed the example of the Sovereign, and come down to parliament desiring a bill of indemnity, the house would have added panegyric to their consent; and would have praised their moderation in the second instance, while they extolled their exertion in the first. He entreated the house to forgive him for having dwelt so long on these excesses, which were all that could be urged in favour of ministers for acting as they did on that occasion. Either they must believe that the whole of the outrages was the result of a deliberate plot and machination, contrived by the enemies of this country, and aiming at the overthrow of the empire; or that the substitution of the military was a safe, easy, and proper remedy, in all cases of riot and tumult. These were the only arguments which could justify ministers in the orders they had given. He would trouble them no farther than by offering to them the propositions which he held in his hand, as the ground of a remedy for the evil of which he had complained. He carried his ideas much farther than he had

brought them forward to the house; but he had been restrained by the opinions of men for whom he entertained much respect. He now read his motions, the purport of which were as follow :

1. " That the military force entrusted to His Majesty by parliament, cannot justifiably be applied to the dispersing illegal and tumultuous assemblies of the people, without waiting for directions from the civil magistrates, but where the outrages have broke forth with such violence, that all civil authority is overborne, and the immediate subversion of all legal government directly threatened."

2. " That the necessity of issuing that unprecedented order to the military, on the 7th of June last, to act without waiting for directions from the civil magistrates, affords a strong presumption of the defective state of the magistracy of Westminster, where the riots began."

3. " That a Committee be appointed to inquire into the conduct of the magistracy and civil power of the city of Westminster, with respect to the riots in June last; and to examine and report to this house, the present state of the magistracy and government of the said city."

He concluded with moving the first of those propositions, which, he said, as it was altogether declaratory, he trusted would not be opposed. At the same time it was not essential to the subsequent motions, which were specific, and went to the purpose for which he had presumed to call the attention of the house.

The Honourable General, then Mr. Fitzpatrick, seconded the motion. The Earl of Surrey objected to the latter part of it " as making the purport of the whole vague and indeterminate. Overthrowing the civil power was a matter" he observed, " which would admit of various acceptations; and if a discretion was given to government to interpret that charge, it might be applied to every riotous act whatever."

To this Mr. SHERIDAN replied, the noble lord had not accurately attended to the words of his motion;

for he had himself adverted to the latitude which might be taken in interpreting the exception; and therefore, instead of stating the order for the military even in such cases to be legal, had only called it justifiable; leaving the specific justification, as now, open to the review of parliament in every particular case. He had, however, no objection, he said, to leave out that clause, and advised it to be done; but was informed by the speaker, that as the motion had been made and seconded, it could now only be altered by another motion for an amendment.

Mr. Sheridan withdrew the first motion; and the house divided on the second proposition.

For the motion 94; against it 171.—The third motion was negatived without a division.

MARCH 12.

MR. BYNG'S MOTION ON THE LOAN OF THIS
YEAR, 1781.

The object of Mr. Byng's motion was to convict the minister of having made a worse bargain for the public than he might have made, to shew, that he might have borrowed money at 5 per cent. That he was offered the immense sum of £38,000,000, and consequently was under no necessity of hurrying on a bad bargain. That these offers were made by wealthy and responsible men, who were fully equal to the support of their propositions. That their proposals were rejected with contempt; and that it was evident the new loan could have been made with no other view than that of corrupt influence. The minister admitted that he had no objection to the first motion, which was for a list of all the subscribers to the new loan specifying the sums subscribed by each: the second (for a list of those whose offers to become subscribers to the new loan had been rejected) he considered as useless: and the third (for copies of all letters and papers sent to the minister or his secretary respecting the loan) he regarded as unfair and improper. The first motion being then agreed to, the second was rejected upon a division, and the third negatived without. In the course of the debate Lord North observed that with regard to the idea of extending the influence of the crown by means of a loan, if that argument was to be

tried by the test of the present loan, it would be found he had made more enemies than friends by the list sent to the bank;—upon which

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that an expression had dropped from the noble lord, which to his surprise, had not been taken up by any gentleman. The noble lord had said, “he believed it would be found that he had made more enemies than friends by the list he had sent to the Bank,” as it served to make him believe that the noble lord was coming over to the opinion of an honorable friend of his, who had brought in a bill lately to regulate the civil establishment; and had contended that taking away from the minister the power of bestowing great pecuniary emoluments by loans, &c. and of appointing to places, would strengthen the true and proper influence of the crown; remove a very heavy clog from the heel of government; and assist the progress of its operations. By the noble lord’s complaining that the present loan had made him enemies, if his lordship was sincere in his present declaration, it would not be at all surprising, if, in a few days, the noble lord should bring in a bill for abolishing all those places; lest, by keeping them up, and making enemies to government by them, he should destroy the influence of the crown.

MAY 15.

FARTHER DEBATE ON THE BILL FOR PREVENTING ABUSES AND PROFANATIONS ON THE SABBATH DAY.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that whenever the vice of gaming was to be suppressed, he hoped that most pernicious species of it, the adventuring in lotteries, would be the first object of attention. This, it was true, was patronised by the legislature, and yet nothing could be more detrimental to the morals of

the people ; for it not only promoted the spirit of gambling among the lower orders of society, but by suspending all industrious pursuits, tended to introduce every kind of depravity. While the evil was permitted to reign in its late extent, it was in a fair way of curing itself; for every second tradesman being a lottery-office keeper, and very few possessing any capital, the smallest loss made them abscond, and the public credulity was thereby gradually diminished;—but now the practice had been regulated, by the wisdom of parliament, for the better security of adventurers, it would no doubt perpetually increase, with all its train of mischievous consequences; for government had entered into a sort of partnership with the office-keepers; and as they were to derive a benefit from the success of the delusions, they would no doubt do every thing in their power to extend their dealings.

As the learned gentleman, (the solicitor general) who brought in the bill, had already on one occasion stood forward, not only as the *censor morum*, but as the *arbiter elegantiarum*, at once the Cato and the Petronius of the age, he hoped he would be active in his new character, and join in putting a stop to lottery gaming, by bringing in a bill to abolish all the present lottery offices, and preventing the opening of any new ones in future.

MAY 17.

ON THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL FOR
PREVENTING DESERTION IN THE NAVY.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that the honorable gentleman (Mr. Penton) had omitted to take notice of one objection adduced by Mr. Dunning, which was, that when sailors, suspected to be deserters, were brought before a justice of the peace, by virtue of this act, though the suspicion turned out to be

groundless, they might, nevertheless, by authority of former statutes, be impressed. He ironically complimented the board of Admiralty for the high sense they seemed here to entertain of the honor of British sailors;—it might be illustrated by a very trite anecdote of Julius Cæsar; for, like his wife, the character of our seamen must be as clear of suspicion as just impeachment; they not only must not be deserters, but not suspected to be so.

The Attorney-General answered Mr. Sheridan, and concluded the debate; when the question was decided by a division;

For the second reading 65; against it 73.—The bill in consequence was thrown out.

JUNE 20.

ON THE BILL TO EXPLAIN AND AMEND THE MARRIAGE ACT.

Mr. Fox moved a clause by which persons were declared marriageable without the consent of parents and guardians at the ages, the woman at sixteen and the man at eighteen; and that all marriages solemnized at an earlier age of each of the parties, should be null and void. An amendment was moved by Lord Mahon to alter the ages, to eighteen the woman, and twenty-one the man.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, gentlemen were so inveterate against the marriage act, that in the heat of their zeal, they seemed to argue as if that act was designed to prevent marriages; when it was undoubtedly true, that to encourage marriages of a regular and proper sort, was its real aim and intention. He said his honorable friend, who brought in the bill (Mr. Fox), appeared not to be aware, that if he carried the clause, enabling girls to marry at sixteen, he would do an injury to that liberty of which he had always shewn himself the friend; and promote domestic tyranny, which he could consider only as little less intolerable than public tyranny. If girls were allowed to marry at sixteen, they

would, he conceived, be abridged of that happy freedom of intercourse, which modern custom had introduced between the youth of both sexes; and which was, in his opinion, the best nursery of happy marriages. Guardians would, in that case, look on their wards with a jealous eye, from a fear that footmen and those about them, might take advantage of their tender years, and immature judgment, and persuade them into marriage, as soon as they attained the age of sixteen. In like manner young men, when mere boys, in a moment of passion, however ill-directed, or perhaps in a moment of intoxication, might be prevailed upon to make an imprudent match, and probably be united to a common prostitute. Mr. Sheridan said he was ready to admit, that the marriage act had some absurd clauses in it; but he could not agree, that the whole of that act was so impolitic, or so productive either of mischief or of inconvenience, as to stand in need of a total repeal.

To this Mr. Fox replied, that his honorable friend Mr. Sheridan had so much ingenuity of mind, that he could contrive to give an argument what turn he pleased; he considered not therefore, when what he said was really in support of domestic tyranny, he should ground it on a wish to preserve liberty.

Ayes (for Mr. Fox's motion) 36; Noes (for Lord Mahon's amendment) 7.

NOVEMBER 27.

PROSECUTION OF THE AMERICAN WAR.

The King opened the session with a speech containing a declaration of the intentions of government to continue the prosecution of the American war to the last extremity, notwithstanding the desperate situation of our affairs; and an address, framed in the usual form, was moved by Mr. Perceval. The attempt to pledge the house by the proposed address to the unqualified support of a determination so frantic and desperate, in spite of seven years dear-bought experience, and in the teeth of national bankruptcy and ruin; the audacity of holding such language at the very instant when the calamitous effects of the misconduct of ministers called for penitence and humiliation; were topics urged by Mr. Fox with great eloquence and ability; and followed by a severe reprehension of the principles of the war;—of the delusions by which parliament had been

led on, year after year to support it ;—and of the gross and criminal mismanagement that appeared in every branch of administration, and particularly in the marine department. To the negligence and incapacity of the minister at the head of that board, Lord Sandwich, he ascribed the loss of the army under Lord Cornwallis. Mr. Fox concluded a speech of great length and commanding eloquence by observing, that in his opinion no address whatsoever should be sent up to the throne, until they had an opportunity of going down to their constituents, and consulting with them on the matter. He finally proposed an amendment which would give His Majesty the assurance of their loyalty and zeal; and would promise, in a more effectual way, to support the essential rights and permanent interests of his empire.—Mr. Rigby having animadverted on the desire expressed by Mr. Fox, and others, to take counsel from their constituents, which he considered unconstitutional, if not illegal,

Mr. SHERIDAN rose. He reprehended Mr. Rigby for the contemptuous manner in which he had spoken, and always did speak, of the constituent body of the country. He defended the honorable member, Mr. Fox's, ideas on the subject; and argued very forcibly on Mr. Rigby's declaration, that the house were in possession of all the sense of the country. Mr. Sheridan then adverted to the arguments that had been urged to claim the confidence and support of the house at this juncture, which, he said, all went to prove that ministers were entitled to the support of the country, in proportion as they shewed themselves unfit to govern it. He was particularly happy in his manner of handling what Lord George Germaine asserted, that he still continued to regard America as the brightest jewel of the crown.

The house divided on the amendment; Ayes 129—Noes 218. The original address was then agreed to.

DECEMBER 4.

MR. BURKE'S MOTION TO ENQUIRE INTO THE CONFISCATION AND DISPOSAL OF THE EFFECTS, &c. OF THE INHABITANTS OF ST. EUSTATIUS, CAPTURED BY ADMIRAL SIR GEO. RODNEY AND GENERAL VAUGHAN.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he was very unwilling to trouble the house at so late an hour; but he

thought it necessary to ask one plain question; and that was, Did the honorable admiral (Sir George Rodney) and the honorable general (Vaughan) consent to the proposed enquiry or not? For if they had no objection to it, and they neither of them had hinted any thing that might lead the house to believe they had, there certainly would be no opposition to it. The noble lord (North) in the blue riband could not possibly be so good a guardian of their honour, as the commanders themselves. He therefore desired to know if the honorable admiral and general had any dislike to the enquiry; and if neither of them gave any answer, he should take it for granted that they had not.

Upon a division there appeared for the motion 89; against it 168.

FEBRUARY 7, 1782.

NAVAL AFFAIRS OF 1781.

In a Committee of the house to enquire into the causes of the want of success of our naval force during the war, and particularly in the year 1781, Mr. Fox moved the following resolution:—"That it appears to this committee, that there was gross mismanagement in the administration of naval affairs in the year 1781."—In the course of the debate, Lord North admitted "that many of our best officers were unemployed and disgusted; but that it by no means appeared they had any just cause for their disgust."

Mr. SHERIDAN spoke with great energy, and commented on what had fallen from Lord North; particularly in the expression, that though there were many of the best officers disgusted, they had no cause for disgust. He condemned the noble lord, in pointed terms, for expressing such language, at a time when that house, and all the world, knew and felt the treatment which the veteran commanders of the fleet had experienced. The honorable gentleman, with most forcible expression, declared his abhorrence of language so disrespectful and unbecoming, after their shameless behaviour; by which

their country had, in its worst moments, lost the benefit of assistance from such distinguished characters as a Keppel, a Howe, a Barrington, a Parker, a Harland, a Pigot, a Byron, and all who had been driven into retirement. He repeated many of the gallant actions of these men, and spoke in high terms of the just influence which they possessed in the navy, and the credit which they had with the people. The present was a time to speak out. Men must not now, from false motives of personal prudence, keep from the knowledge of their country, the reasons which induced, or which constrained them to relinquish the service. There were several of these officers then present in the house; and he hoped they would now rise, fired at the insult offered them by the expression of the noble lord in the blue riband, and explain fully and clearly the reasons which they had for withdrawing. One of those admirals (Keppel) had given that explanation. His reasons had been too evident to require disclosure; but there were other distinguished admirals in the house who had not been so explicit; and of whom all the world entertained the highest opinion. From their accounts the house would see whether there was either decency or modesty in the language of the noble lord; and also whether, after such behaviour to men so eminent, it would be either just or prudent to suffer the Earl of Sandwich to continue in place; for he was a man born for the destruction of the British navy.

For the motion 183; against it 205.

FEBRUARY 20.

MR. FOX'S MOTION, "THAT IT APPEARS TO THIS HOUSE THAT THERE HAS BEEN GREAT MISMANAGEMENT IN HIS MAJESTY'S NAVAL AFFAIRS IN THE YEAR 1781."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he was surprised to hear gentlemen differ on the present question. The public

notoriety of our failure at sea, spoke at once for the motion ; and to hear gentlemen urge, that if they voted for this motion, it ought to be followed by the dismissal of Lord Sandwich ; was exactly similar to that which must for ever appear a disgrace to us, viz. voting that “ the influence of the crown had encreased, was still encreasing, and ought to be diminished ;” and negating the very first motion afterwards, grounded on that resolution. Surely, he said, we were not going to fall into the same error now. It had been strongly urged, that the reason why Lord Sandwich should not be removed now was, on account of his having laid his plans for the ensuing campaign, which would be all frustrated, if he did not continue in office. Good God ! what good could be expected from the future plans of a man that had planned so badly before ? Certainly nothing ; and if that was to be the case, why was there a new secretary appointed a few days back ? Had not the late one formed his plans ? Surely, if it would hold good in one, it would in the other ; but he wished there had been no plans formed by the late American secretary ; for he dreaded to see the day, if ever the army should return from America ;—it must be an awful day to England. No man could foresee the consequence of what might happen on the return of a large body of men, who had, for a series of years, been unnaturally employed to shed the blood of their fellow-subjects. He was heard throughout with great attention, and concluded with saying, that he dreaded making a peace till the marine of France was humbled. If peace was made while the house of Bourbon was equal in marine force to this country, he feared there would be an end not only to the commerce and prosperity, but also to the civil liberties of the kingdom.

For the motion 217 ; against it 236.

FEBRUARY 27.

**GENERAL CONWAY'S MOTION FOR PUTTING AN
END TO OFFENSIVE WAR IN AMERICA.**

In the course of the debate Sir William Dolben having intimated his intention of voting against the motion, although he had voted in favor of it on a preceding evening, Mr. Sheridan, in a most admirable piece of satire, ridiculed the strange conduct of a man who was the representative of one of our universities, and who, from his erudition and character, was supposed to have an influence on country gentlemen. He reprobated the paltry subterfuge of ministers, in their having expressed and wished for a truce; and was confident that every thinking man in the house would see through it, and not be led into the snare so artfully laid for them. An adjournment was moved by the Attorney-General; but, on a division, the minister had a majority of 9 against him; and the original question was afterwards put and carried without a division.

MARCH 8.

**MOTION, BY LORD JOHN CAVENDISH, OF CEN-
SURE ON HIS MAJESTY'S MINISTERS.**

Mr. SHERIDAN (who had risen several times before, but had resumed his seat, to give way to other speakers) said, he should not have risen again, not having met the speaker's eye before, but that he thought the learned lord (the Lord-Advocate of Scotland) and the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Rigby) who had followed him, had led the argument to such an issue, that it was impossible for any one who had a respect for the constituent body of the country, not to wish to give his sentiments on the extraordinary arguments they had used. He meant to speak to the purpose; but he wished not to be judged by the test laid down by the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Rigby) for he meant to give no offence in what he should say: though it was true, the rule had been proposed from high authority; for undoubtedly, if the degree of offence which speeches gave, was to be considered as the criterion of eloquence, the right honorable gentleman must be

looked up to, as the Demosthenes of that assembly. He had acted, however, in that day's debate, perfectly consistent; he had assured the house, that he thought the noble lord ought to resign his offices; and yet he would give his vote for his remaining in it. The hon. gentleman had long declared, that he thought the American war ought to be abandoned; but he had uniformly given his vote for its continuance. He did not mean, however, to insinuate any motives for such conduct;—he believed the right hon. gentleman to have been sincere;—he believed, that, as a member of parliament, as a privy-counsellor, as a private gentleman, he had always detested the American war as much as any man: but that he had never been able to persuade the paymaster that it was a bad war; and, unfortunately, in whatever character he spoke, it was the paymaster who always voted in that house. His attacks on the noble lord, he said, appeared only an ingenious method of supporting him; it was figurative; but *aye* and *no* were speeches that did not admit of a trope. Mr. Sheridan then attacked the language used by that honorable gentleman, on all occasions, where the constituents of that house were mentioned. His manner of treating the late petitions on the American war was highly indecent, and at that time extremely impolitic. The people began to be sufficiently irritated: gentlemen should be careful to drop no expressions of contempt towards them in that house; they had borne a great deal; and it might be imprudent to treat their patience with insult. The way to prevent the interference of the people; the way to destroy those associations and petitions, which seemed so offensive to the right honorable gentleman, was to endeavour to make parliament respectable. Let that house shew itself independent; let it shew itself consistent; and the people will never think of interfering; but if parliament became contemptible in the eyes of the nation, the

people would interfere, and neither threats nor influence would prevent them.

He was sorry to have observed that the debates of that day had worn so much the complexion of a contention between two parties; the one eager to keep their places, the other to get them: for this, he thought, the ground of all others on which the people, who were the real sufferers in the contest, had a right to say they would be heard and be attended to. Mr. Sheridan then adverted to the Lord Advocate's attack on the supposed dangerous principles of his honorable friend (Mr. Fox) supposing he were minister. He ridiculed the learned lord's apprehensions, that his honorable friend, were he at the head of affairs in that house, and ever to find himself in a minority, that he would fly from the decision of parliament, and appeal to the people. What! did the learned lord mean that he would ever appeal to the people as a minister? Did he see no distinction between a member of parliament applying to his constituents, whose agent he was; and a servant of the crown holding an office at the will of His Majesty, attempting to appeal to them in that capacity against parliament?—No, were his honorable friend in the noble lord's place, and were he to forfeit, which he could not easily suppose, the confidence of parliament, he was sure he would neither fly to the people, nor to the throne for support. He would disdain to continue longer in his office; he would not cling with the convulsive grasp of despair to the helm, which he was no longer able to guide: on the contrary, he would no doubt follow the advice, which the learned lord himself had successfully given to a late minister;—he would instantly retire, though not to the other house perhaps, but to a situation more honorable in the hearts of the people.

The noble lord, however, in the blue riband, (North,) Mr. Sheridan said, was certainly not

likely to give any apprehensions of this sort to his friend the learned advocate. He gave him full credit for having no thoughts of flying to the people for refuge upon the majority which had appeared against him in parliament. He dared not look the people in the face, much less ask their protection. He would as soon fly to some town in America, disfigured with the blood and miseries of this inhuman war, which the noble lord had so obstinately persevered in, and hope to find a sanctuary there. Having pressed this idea with great force, he took a view of the arguments used by another gentleman (Mr. Adam) to prove that opposition had been chiefly instrumental in the calamities of the country; and after reasoning very forcibly on the subject, he put it to the minister, whether he would ever come forward and answer to the world with such an excuse as this; whether he would ever acknowledge, that he, having had every thing he had desired,—having been entrusted with an unbounded treasure and immense army,—having had the whole force and the purse of the nation in his hands, he had yet been defeated in all his projects, by the talking and writing of a party in the country, who had yet never prevented him from having a man or a guinea he had demanded? he believed that the noble lord himself, whatever situation he might be brought to, had too much candour and spirit ever to stoop to such a defence.

He concluded with a warm panegyric on the conduct and principles of opposition, which he said he should not presume to make, if it were not in his power to assert that he gave his vote as independently as any man in that house; that no man should ever dictate to him; that he gave it as he did, from a sincere conviction that *that* party had ability to retrieve the affairs of this country, as far as they could now be retrieved; and that they were men who had an honest meaning to the constitution

and liberties of the country, both of which he thought actually assailed under the present system.

On a division, there appeared ayes 226; noes 216; majority in favor of the ministers 10.

MARCH 12.

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE OF WAYS
AND MEANS—DUTIES ON THE CARRIAGE
OF GOODS AND INSURANCE.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he had determined to avoid saying a single word on the subject, as it was an awkward and embarrassing circumstance for any member to speak in opposition to a tax, when he happened to be materially concerned in the object of it. If he alone was interested, perhaps he should have taken no measure whatever on the subject; but as a very extensive property of others, as well as the welfare of numbers employed in that property, were concerned, it would be unjust to them, and an abuse of their personal confidence in him, were he to be inactive in the matter. It was not, however, his intention to trouble the house with opposing it then; he meant to pursue a very fair method in laying before the noble lord at the head of the treasury, his objections in writing, with a real and candid state of the question. The product of the tax was but a trifle to the public, in comparison to the injury it would do to private property, and the oppression with which it must be collected.

Mr. Gilbert declared that he was sure, the tax on the land navigation carriage went much beyond the noble lord's estimate; and might be rated certainly at an excess beyond, he believed, the whole of the tax of all the carriages. It would fall, too, more peculiarly heavy on the poor, especially in the article of coals, which would be burthensome on

every rank of life. He said, that he should endeavour, before the bill for regulating the carriage tax was brought into that house, to possess himself with sufficient arguments to oppose it.

APRIL 8.

MR. EDEN'S MOTION TO REPEAL SO MUCH OF THE ACT OF GEORGE I. AS ASSERTED A RIGHT TO THE KING AND PARLIAMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN TO MAKE LAWS TO BIND THE KINGDOM OF IRELAND.

On the 20th of March, Lord North communicated to the house, that His Majesty had come to a full determination of changing his ministers. On the first day of the meeting of parliament, after the recess, the affairs of Ireland were unexpectedly brought before the house, by Mr. Eden; who having been secretary to the Earl of Carlisle, lord lieutenant of that country, was just arrived from thence with his resignation of the vice royalty. This gentleman after taking a political view of the history of Ireland during the last two years, acquainted the house with the measures, he said, were there forming, for rendering it totally independent of the British legislature, and made the motion stated above. The precipitation, with which a business of such magnitude and importance was thus attempted to be forced on the house, without previous communication; with any of His Majesty's new ministers, or knowledge of their intentions, was severely censured by many members; and the more especially, as it appeared Mr. Eden had refused to give any official information to government, relative to the state of the country he had just left. Mr. Eden, though loudly called on to withdraw his motion, persisted, urging its necessity; when

Mr. SHERIDAN rose. He observed, he could not sit still and see a question of this importance, which was then just going to be put from the chair, rejected or evaded in the manner which it was likely to be. He could not dismiss his hopes that the right honorable gentleman, who had moved it, might yet be induced to withdraw it; and he was convinced the greatest mischiefs would follow its being otherwise disposed of. The learned gentleman, (Mr. Mansfield,) who was the only person who had attempted to defend the extraordinary conduct of the secretary for Ireland, (Mr. Eden,)

had taken great pains to prove, that it made no difference in what manner the motion was got rid of. He differed entirely from him on that head; and he had the authority of the honorable gentleman himself, who had made the motion, on his side; for he had expressly declared, that if the motion was evaded by the previous question, or by moving the order of the day, he apprehended the most serious mischiefs to Ireland would follow. He called, therefore, upon that honorable gentleman, if he had any real feeling for the interest and peace of either country, not to persevere in bringing on the mischiefs which he acknowledged he foresaw. Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to state the whole of Mr. Eden's conduct in this business, which he attacked with great acrimony, as scandalously unfair to the new ministers, who though he was convinced they had the fairest intentions towards Ireland; yet if he declared himself so decided an enemy to the principle of the declaratory law in question, which he had always regarded as a tyrannous usurpation in this country, he could not but reprobate the motives which influenced the present mover for its repeal; but, if the house divided on it, he should vote with him. With regard to the fair representation of the intentions of the new ministers, which the honorable gentleman had been called on by the noble lord, who seconded the motion, to give to the Irish on his return, he could give but little credit to his intentions on that head; it was his business, and his direct and explicit duty, to have given a fair representation, and full information, of the state of Ireland, to His Majesty's present ministers here, for which purpose he had been sent to London. He had deserted that duty; and, from motives of private pique and resentment, had withheld all information from them on the subject. It was but reasonable, therefore, to suppose that the same principles would direct his conduct on his return to Ireland;

and the same little motives of resentment would lead him to with-hold from the parliament of that country, the satisfactory information of the intentions of the new ministers, though it was equally his duty to report it.

MAY 7.

MR. PITT'S MOTION, " THAT A COMMITTEE BE APPOINTED TO ENQUIRE INTO THE STATE OF THE REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT, AND TO REPORT TO THE HOUSE THEIR OBSERVATIONS THEREON."

This debate was long, and ably supported by the mover, Mr. Sawbridge, Sir George Saville, Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, and others on the side of a reform; by Mr. Powys, Mr. Thomas Pitt, and the Lord Advocate of Scotland against it. On a division, the motion was rejected by a majority of 161 to 141. Mr. Sheridan spoke much in favor of the motion, and answered the Lord Advocate in every argument he had advanced. He took up some similies of Sir George Saville and Mr. Courteney in a beautiful manner, and plainly shewed the necessity of an enquiry being appointed.

JUNE 26.

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE
E O BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN said it would be in vain to prohibit E O tables, while a more dangerous and pernicious mode of gaming was countenanced and supported by law; he meant the gaming in the lottery. The power given by the bill to justices of the peace was too great to be given to any set of magistrates; but still by much too great to be given to the justices of Westminster and Middlesex. He did not mean to speak of them all as bad magistrates; for there were certainly some very respectable characters to be found among them; but, in general, he would not trust such a power to any set of magis-

trates, as was proposed to be given by this bill: but much less, when many of those who should act under the bill, were themselves suspected of being proprietors of E O tables;—to his knowledge there were two Middlesex justices concerned in lottery offices. He would therefore recommend it to the house, instead of passing the bill, to turn their thoughts towards a reform of the police of Westminster; for it would be ineffectual, nay absurd, to pass the best laws, if no confidence could be reposed in the honor and integrity of those who were to see them properly executed and obeyed.

The report was agreed to.

DECEMBER 11.

ON THE VOTE OF SUPPLY FOR THE NAVY.

On this motion being proposed, Mr. Fox rose, not to oppose the supplies, but to know positively and explicitly whether we were at peace or war. He said that on the 23d November, the Secretary of State had written a letter to the Lord Mayor the most extraordinary and unwarrantable he had ever heard of; and had therein assigned, as a reason for the prorogation of parliament, a treaty of peace which was on the tapis between this country and the Belligerent powers. In that letter he had promised, that at the meeting of parliament, he would inform his lordship and the public positively, whether we were to have peace or war. The parliament had met, and the public were still in a state of uncertainty; they were just now going to provide for the navy, and no explanation had been made by ministers. He therefore called upon them to stand forward, and inform the house whether we were to have peace or war? In reply it was stated by ministers, that the provisional articles would be laid before the house on the instant there should be a conclusion either for war or peace. "Those articles," observed Mr. Pitt, "acknowledged the independence of America, substantially and conclusively, and the recognition could not be revoked, even if the present treaty should go off."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that it was not only the noble earl at the head of the treasury (the Earl of Shelburne), who had given an explanation of the provisional articles different from that given by the ministers in this house; but in a public company,

where he was some days ago, a noble person,* in whose words he placed more confidence than in those of the noble earl, had given an opinion exactly correspondent. This was not a matter of private confidence,—it was not mentioned as a secret; and therefore he was at liberty to make use of the explanation, and to advance it as an argument of caution to the house, how they hastily voted a war establishment, on language so contradictory.

Sir Cecil Wray confirmed what Mr. Sheridan stated, in regard to the conversation of the Duke of Richmond, and said that this contrariety of sentiment gave him just alarms, and made him hesitate to grant a war establishment, when he could not be absolutely certain that the war with America was actually at an end.

DECEMBER 18.

MR. FOX'S MOTION FOR A COPY OF THE PROVISIONAL TREATY WITH AMERICA.

In the course of this debate Mr. Sheridan adverted to what he had said of the communication made by a noble duke in a public company. "That communication both he and Sir Cecil Wray clearly understood to be public, and not only so, but that they had the noble duke's express leave to mention it in that house." This was contradicted by Mr. Steele, upon which Mr. Sheridan again averred, "that direct authority was given by his grace the Duke of Richmond to Sir Cecil Wray, to relate the conversation in the house."

FEBRUARY 14, 1783.

MR. SHERIDAN'S MOTION FOR SUCH PARTS OF THE TREATY PENDING BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND HOLLAND, AS RELATED TO CESSIONS TO BE MADE BY THE FORMER TO THE LATTER.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that as he was to be called upon so soon, to give his vote in approbation or dis-

* The Duke of Richmond, in a conversation at a meeting of the society for Constitutional Information.

approbation of the peace, it was his duty to seek for such information as should enable him to form a just and safe judgment on so weighty and important a subject. The right honorable secretary had stated to the house, that Holland has acceded to the proposal of a cessation of hostilities; but he had said nothing relative to the state in which the treaty between that republic and this country at present stood; and yet it was, in his opinion, necessary that it should be known, before gentlemen could form a just and safe judgment on one of the articles of the treaty with France. The article to which he alluded was the sixteenth, wherein it is stated, "that if either of the contracting parties has any allies in India, they shall be invited to accede to the peace; and four months shall be given to them to consider of it, from the time that they shall have received such invitation; after which period of four months, it shall not be lawful for either of the contracting parties (England and France) to give these allies any assistance."—Now, as it was not stated in the article when these allies were to be invited to accede to the peace, it was in the power of France to withhold the invitation, on her part, as long as she pleased; and during that time, and for four months after, she should have given the invitation, she would find herself at liberty to assist her allies against us; and therefore might assist the Dutch in recovering their settlements, now in her possession, or Hyder Aly in over-running the Carnatic. In such a case he thought it would be the duty of the house immediately to address the crown, not to part with Trincomale, until such time as peace should be concluded, and ratified with Holland. This was a reason that made him wish to know in what state of progress the treaty between us and that republic was at present; and therefore he would desire to be informed if Trincomale, or any other late Dutch settlements, were to be restored to Holland. If he should find that they were, then he certainly would

move to address the crown that Trincomale, &c. should not be restored until the treaty with Holland should be concluded, and peace restored to the Carnatic. Ministers not having given any answer, he moved that such parts of the treaty at present pending between Great Britain and Holland, as related to cessions to be made by the former to the latter, be laid before the house.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Fox. Mr. Pitt rose with great warmth, and inveighed with much vehemence against the motion. He observed, " Did any member ever hear of ministers proclaiming to the house secrets of a treaty still depending," and " that a more preposterous thing could not have been done by the mover, than to call for the particulars of a treaty before it was concluded. He trusted, therefore, that in his cooler judgment he would withdraw his motion."

Mr. SHERIDAN declared, that in making the motion, he had no other object whatever than to procure such information as should enable him to form a safe judgment of the peace; and if he could not obtain that information, he would readily consent to withdraw his motion, which had been treated with so many harsh and unprovoked expressions by the right honorable member. That gentleman used frequently to recommend it to members to debate with coolness, temper, and moderation; he was sorry that in this instance the right honorable gentleman had not a little enforced the precept by example. He wished also that he had spoken in as high a tone, and held as lofty a language in making the peace; he would not then be obliged to stand so much on the defensive, as perhaps he might be under the necessity of doing on Monday next; because he might, by talking and acting boldly, have made a better peace. The question was withdrawn.

FEBRUARY 17.

CONSIDERATION OF THE PRELIMINARY ARTICLES OF PEACE, BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE AND SPAIN, AND OF THE PROVISIONAL TREATY WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The preliminary articles of peace between Great Britain and France, and between Great Britain and Spain, were signed at Versailles on the 2d of January, and on the 27th, copies of the same, and of the provisional treaty with the United States of America, were laid before both houses of parliament; and after a short debate ordered to be printed.

Monday, the 17th February, was appointed for taking them into consideration; and in the intermediate time several motions were made for such papers and documents as might assist the house in deciding on their merits. On the day appointed, upwards of 450 members were assembled. After the papers were read, a motion was made by Mr. Thomas Pitt, and seconded by Mr. Wilberforce, "that an address of thanks should be presented to the King, for his gracious condescension in ordering the preliminary and provisional articles of the several treaties which His Majesty had concluded, to be laid before them; and to assure His Majesty, they had considered them with that attention so important a subject required. To express their satisfaction that His Majesty had, in consequence of the powers intrusted to him, laid the foundation by the provisional articles with the states of North America, for a treaty of peace, which they trusted would insure perfect reconciliation and friendship between both countries; and that in this confidence they presumed to express their just expectations, that the several states of North America would carry into effectual and satisfactory execution those measures which the congress was so solemnly bound by the treaty to recommend in favor of such persons as had suffered for the part they had taken in the war; and that they should consider this circumstance as the surest indication of returning friendship. To acknowledge their due sense of that wise and paternal regard for the happiness of his subjects, which induced His Majesty to relieve them from the burthensome and expensive war; and to assure His Majesty they would encourage every exertion of his subjects of Great Britain and Ireland in the improvement of those resources, which must tend to the augmentation of the public strength, and the prosperity of his dominions."

Of this address an amendment was moved by Lord John Cavendish, to leave out all that part after the words "to assure His Majesty," and to insert instead thereof the following: "His faithful commons will proceed to consider the same, with that serious and full attention which a subject of such importance to the present and future interests of His Majesty's dominions deserves. That in the

mean time they entertained the fullest confidence of His Majesty's paternal care: that he will concert with his parliament such measures as may be expedient for extending the commerce of his subjects. That whatever may be the sentiments of his faithful commons on the investigation of the terms of pacification, they beg leave to assure His Majesty of their firm and unalterable resolution to adhere inviolably to the several articles for which the public faith is pledged, and to maintain the blessings of peace, so necessary to His Majesty's subjects, and the general happiness of mankind."

A second amendment was afterwards moved by Lord North, to insert after the words "commerce of his subjects," the following: "And His Majesty's faithful commons feel that it would be superfluous to express to His Majesty the regards due from the nation to every description of men, who, with the risk of their lives, and the sacrifice of their properties, have distinguished their loyalty and fidelity during a long and calamitous war."

The original address was supported by Mr. Secretary Townshend, Mr. Chancellor Pitt, Mr. Dundas, the Solicitor-General, and by Mr. Powys, Mr. Banks, and some other country gentlemen. The amendments by Lord North, Mr. Fox, Mr. Burke, Mr. Sheridan, Governor Johnstone, Lord Mulgrave, Sir Henry Fletcher, Mr. Adam, and by several country gentlemen.

Mr. SHERIDAN made a very accurate reply to the Lord Advocate; and warmly touched upon the strokes the learned lord threw out on the conduct of his honourable friend, (Mr. Fox) and the share he had taken during the short time he was in administration to effectuate the great end of peace. He contended that the treaty on the table was of the most disgraceful nature, for it relinquished completely every thing that was glorious and great in this country. If there was a single article that had a view to the interests of the empire,—if there was a single article that had not concession for its object, he would not contend that the peace was what almost every person pronounced it. The sixteenth article was one of the most inconsistent political productions that could possibly be supposed; it was couched in such vague and loose terms, that it must have relation to the impending treaty with Holland. It was with the view of finding out the extent of that article, and what reference it had to the treaty yet pending, and the

political disposition it evidently had towards France, that the honorable gentleman made his motion on a former day; and which called forth the indignation of a right honorable person in his eye (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) as being inconsistent with the established usage of the house,—unprecedented and preposterous in the extreme. This convinced him, however, that the right honorable gentleman was more a practical politician than an experienced one; his years and his very early political exaltation, had not permitted him to look whether there had been precedents, or to acquire a knowledge of the Journals of the house. Had his youth permitted him to acquire such knowledge, his discretion would not have suffered his abilities, which Mr. Sheridan greatly admired, to be carried away by his heat and precipitancy; he would not with so much indignation have resented the asking questions, which it was the duty of ministers to satisfy. If he had consulted the Journals, the honorable gentleman said he would have found incontestible evidence, to prove the groundless authority of his indignant assertions;—he would have found that it was not unprecedented to lay a depending treaty before the house; nay, that before a single step had been taken to complete any of the points of it, it had been usual for parliament to be in possession of the principles upon which it was proposed a treaty should turn. Parliament was called upon to assist with its advice on the vast subject of national importance; which peace must naturally, in all times be, as involving in it so much the general prosperity, and happiness of Europe. Ministers in former days, had not the ingenious modesty, and handsome diffidence of those of the present; they, distrusting their own abilities on a matter of such infinite importance, were not ashamed to call in the assistance of parliament. They were not so eager to sport their responsibility;

nor did they fear that the house would interfere to rob them of the glory of their negociations; nor did they, with the anxious solicitude of the present gentlemen, hide every iota of the progress of their negociation, either with a view of astonishing the world with the splendor of their pacific acquisitions, or to shew their contempt of the wisdom of parliament, in the administration of their own transcendant abilities.

After having proceeded in this vein, he introduced, in support of the conduct of ministers, at the treaty of Aix la Chapelle, stated by the noble lord in the blue riband, a further precedent, extracted from the Journals of the house, in Queen Anne's reign, before the treaty of Utrecht; and which Mr. Sheridan read as part of his speech. It stated, that Her Majesty, notwithstanding it was the undoubted prerogative of her crown, to make peace and war; nevertheless, anxious for the happiness of her people, and relying on the affection of her faithful commons, had ordered to be laid before them, for their advice and approbation, the principles upon which she conceived a general pacification could be most effectually established for the glory of her crown, and the happiness of her people; at the same time informing them, that no step had been taken for the completion of the treaty, nor would there, without their advice and approbation. Thus he shewed, that it was not only preceded to lay the case of the negociation before the house, in its depending state, but the principles upon which the treaty was to take effect, before the negociation for it had ever been commenced. How unlike that was the conduct of the present minister, when the amendment of his noble friend, proposing to give time for the consideration of the articles, to which they were called upon in so very extraordinary a manner to give their approbation: they were told, they had the articles for three weeks before

them ; and that they had ample time, of course, for information ; at the same time that ministers had the hardiness to make use of such language, they seemed to forget the almost inquisitive exactness, with which they shut out the members of that house, from obtaining any knowledge of those circumstances, that could alone qualify them to decide with judgment, upon a treaty that either shewed Great Britain to be ruined beyond redemption ; or that her interests, and her glory had been sacrificed to views that were not immediately discernable.

The answer to every requisition for the production of any article that might lead to this necessary purpose, as was the case of his motion a few days before, Mr. Sheridan said, was in the language of indignation ; it was indecent ; it was unprecedented, and preposterous in the extreme, for gentlemen to introduce any circumstance of enquiry before the day appointed for the discussion of the treaty ; and yet on that day, right honorable persons in his eye had, with the peculiar modesty which so distinguished them, called on the house for their approbation of a treaty, which, it was argued with much indignation, it would be indecent in them to make any enquiries whatever into. But taking the pledge of their bashfulness and modest confidence in their own superior abilities, as the criterion of its perfection ; ministers required the house to be so preposterous as to give a vote of approbation to a treaty, that with the most anxious solicitude they were even prevented from so much as speaking on, until the time they had been so confidently called upon to give it their approbation. And the object of his late motion, he contended, was justly affirmed by an honorable commodore to be of very great magnitude. If Trincomale was given up, our territories in India were in a most precarious situation ; and he contended, after remarking on what had fallen from

Commodore Johnstone, and Sir Henry Fletcher, that the house ought absolutely to know the extent of the sixteenth article, and the situation of the negotiation with Holland. He dissected the article in the most humourous manner. To find the meaning of the different articles, grammatical order was to be inverted; for it was impossible to come to the meaning of them, by adhering to the rules of grammar. He then went into the definition of a real British subject, mentioned in the fifth article with America. The twenty-second article with France might have as well run, to prevent all disputes that had hitherto arisen, as all disputes that may hereafter arise; and grounds enough were left for them. Seeds of disunion, and future broils were sown in the inconsistency of a treaty, of which the poorest political dabbler well might be ashamed. The honorable gentleman drew a very affecting picture of His Majesty's loyal subjects in East Florida, consigned to a government and to a religion they detested. Independently of the impolicy of ceding that province, (and he was not inclined to call the validity of the peace in question, for it was his determination, and that of his friends, to support the national faith,) Mr. Sheridan execrated the treatment of those unfortunate men, who, without the least notice taken of their civil, and religious rights, were handed over as subjects to a power, that would not fail to take vengeance on them, for their zeal and attachment to the religion and government of this country. This was an instance of British degradation, not inferior to the unmanly petitions of government to congress for the wretched Loyalists. Great Britain at the feet of congress, suing in vain, was not a humiliation, or a stigma greater, than the infamy of consigning over the loyal inhabitants of Florida, as we had done, without any conditions whatsoever. To the honor of France and Spain, in their most distressing circumstances, in all their cessions, as in Ca-

nada, &c. they provided by treaty for the civil and religious rights of their quondam subjects. Mr. Sheridan then read the addresses of the inhabitants of Florida, to the governor, some short time back, breathing in the most animated stile, attachment and loyalty to the religion, and government of this country, and their detestation of the conduct of His Majesty's rebellious subjects in the other colonies. Mr. Sheridan took a view of the fur trade, the boundaries of Canada, &c. and was apprehensive the great solicitude shewn by administration to conciliate the affections of America, as it had been termed, would be a great means, in the marking of the boundaries, of creating future dissensions. He went, at length, into the different interests acquired by the Americans and French, and those left to us on the coast of Newfoundland. The logwood trade, of such vast consequence, left in a state amounting almost to non-entity, employed much of his animadversions.

The article of Dunkirk was also to be considered, supposing it even not to be of that importance it formerly was, and of which it might hereafter become to posterity, as strongly accumulating and filling the measure of our disgraces ; that what had been for more than a century, the pride of our ancestors to enforce, we should so rashly concede ; particularly when we were not in a situation, considering our navy (notwithstanding the learned lord's representation), and the relative resources of our enemies, (for it was observed by an honorable commodore, that the criterion of a nation's resources was her credit, and the rule of that credit, the interest she paid, and according to the honorable commodore, Spain paid most enormous interest, and France was much in the same situation ;) considering then those relative circumstances, and the naval situation of Holland, Mr. Sheridan contended, we were so far from being reduced to bear such degrading, such

indelible stigmas and impositions, that we were entitled to an honorable peace.

The victory of Lord Rodney, the defeat of the enemy at Gibraltar, our successes in the East Indies, were also enumerated to prove, that our situation was respectable; that if we were reduced in resources, our enemies had not increased theirs, but were at least equally exhausted. He could not avoid remarking the artful attempt of the right honorable secretary, to put the first amendment, and the second of the noble lord in the blue riband, on the same event. He took notice of Mr. T. Pitt's description of the loyalists,—the real loyalists, and the viper loyalists; and yet though the honorable gentleman, in the peculiar stile of eloquence which so much distinguished him, was very warm in discriminating those characters of the loyalists, and pledged his feelings to give every assistance to the real loyalists; yet, in his address proposed to the throne, the vipers were equally recommended to the royal protection, and the house was equally to be bound for them as for the real loyalists. The honorable gentleman was pointed in reply to the Lord Advocate, on his hints thrown out on Mr. Fox's administration, of peace being in the pocket of certain members of a late administration, &c. Mr. Sheridan said, that he had known his honorable friend's disposition when he came into power, and had the honor of acting with him; and he pledged himself, that, though peace was ardently to be desired, though at any time peace was to be preferred, yet knowing, as he did, the relative circumstances of the powers, he never would have acceded to so dishonorable a peace; and for his own part, he did equally pledge himself, that if his honorable friend was of such a disposition, and during his administration had brought such a peace to conclusion, notwithstanding his friendship and esteem for him, he, as an individual, would have opposed it. It was impossible for language to describe his reprobation

of it, or what he felt for the national disgrace ; but, he said, the true criterion by which his honorable friend's intentions could be judged by, was his correspondence while in office ; and he dared ministers to move for its being laid before the house.—(Here a great cry of “ Move, move.”) He then made some remarks on the coalition of the parties the learned lord had alluded to, and the honey-moon of their loves, which Mr. Sheridan said, if it was the case that there was a coalition, it was rather to be called the wedding day. Mr. Sheridan then attacked the learned lord on his inconsistency, from his having declared he would support no man whose measures he did not approve. He asked the learned lord, if it was consistency then in him to support the patron of equal representation, to which Mr. Sheridan professed himself a warm friend. Was it consistency to support the independence of America, of which he had ever been so determined an enemy ? He put to the Advocate some other questions ; and remarked, that there was such a versatility in the politics of some men, that when interest called, every other consideration gave way ; and if that was not the case, it was hard to suppose how the learned lord's adoration and high-sounding panegyrics of the noble lord in the blue riband, with which the walls of that house were wont to resound, should now be transferred to those connections which had been heretofore so obnoxious to him. He was very severe on the Lord Advocate for his early desertion, and his unfairness of using, in his peculiar situation, recrimination, which at all events could never be allowed as argument.

Mr. Pitt spoke in answer to the various arguments that had been adduced against the motion for the address to the throne. He was pointedly severe on the gentlemen who had spoken against the address, and particularly on Mr. Sheridan. “ No man admired more than he did the abilities of that right honorable gentleman, the elegant sallies of his thought, the gay effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns, and his epigrammatic points ; and if they were reserved

for the proper stage, they would, no doubt, receive what the honorable gentleman's abilities always did receive, the plaudits of the audience; and it would be his fortune "sui plausu gaudere theatri." But this was not the proper scene for the exhibition of these elegancies: and he, therefore, must beg leave to call the attention of the house to the serious consideration of the very important question then before them."

Mr. SHERIDAN then rose to an explanation; which having made, he took notice of that particular sort of personality which the right honorable gentleman had thought proper to introduce. He need not comment on it—the propriety, the taste, the gentlemanly point of it, must have been obvious to the house. But, said Mr. Sheridan, let me assure the right honorable gentleman, that I do now, and will at any time, when he chooses to repeat this sort of allusion, meet it with the most sincere good humour. Nay, I will say more, flattered and encouraged by the right honorable gentleman's panegyric on my talents, if ever I again engage in the compositions he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption, to attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters, the character of the Angry Boy in the Alchymist.

At half-past seven o'clock in the morning the house divided; ayes for the amendment 224; noes 208. Majority against ministers 16. A committee was then appointed to draw up the address thus amended.

MARCH 3.

ARMY ESTIMATES.

In the course of the debate, Mr. David Hartley said, that he believed he should move for an address to the King, to withdraw the troops from New York, when

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that the evacuation of that place must, he presumed, be the work of time; for he supposed the troops were not to be withdrawn, until America should have fulfilled the conditions relative to the loyalists, viz. that prosecutions should

cease; and such loyalists as were in confinement should be released, after the signing of the treaty, which he supposed meant the definitive treaty. He said he could venture to declare for those who might be thought likely to come into office, that they had not the most distant idea of renewing the war in America.

In consequence of a censure on the peace, passed by a resolution of the house of commons on the 21st of February, the Earl of Shelburne quitted his office of first Commissioner of the Treasury; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer declared publicly to the house, that he only held his place till a successor should be appointed to fill it. A ministerial interregnum ensued, which lasted till the beginning of April; during which time, the kingdom remained in a state of great discord, without any responsible government at home; the finances neglected, the military establishments un-reduced, and the negotiations with foreign powers, which the critical conjuncture of affairs rendered peculiarly important, entirely at a stand. On the 31st of March, the Earl of Surrey proposed the following resolution: "That a considerable time having now elapsed, without an administration responsible for the conduct of public affairs, the interposition of the house on the present alarming crisis, is become necessary." This motion was afterwards withdrawn; and on the following day, a second negotiation (a former one having failed) was opened with the Duke of Portland; and on the 2d of April, a new administration was announced, consisting of the following members:—

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET.

First Lord of the Treasury—Duke of Portland.

Secretary of State for the Home Department—Lord North.

Ditto for the Foreign Department—Rt. Hon. Chas. James Fox.

Chancellor of the Exchequer—Lord John Cavendish.

First Lord of the Admiralty—Lord Viscount Keppel.

President of the Council—Lord Viscount Stormont.

Lord Privy Seal—Earl of Carlisle.

NOT OF THE CABINET.

Lords Commissioners for the Custody of the Great Seal—Lord Loughborough, Sir William Henry Ashurst, Sir Beaumont Hotham.

Master-General of the Ordnance—Lord Viscount Townshend.

Secretary at War—Hon. Richard Fitzpatrick.

Paymaster of the Forces—Edmund Burke, Esq.

Treasurer of the Navy—Charles Townshend, Esq.

Attorney-General—James Wallace, Esq.

Solicitor-General—John Lee, Esq.

Secretaries to the Treasury—Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq.

Richard Burke, Esq.

Speaker of the House of Lords—Lord Mansfield.

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland—Earl of Northington.

Secretary to ditto—William Windham, Esq.

APRIL 16.

LOAN.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer brought forward the loan for the services of the current year. The loan borrowed amounted to twelve millions. Eleven bankers, with whom the terms of the loan were settled, had seven hundred thousand pounds each; the remainder was divided amongst the rest of the bankers, the great trading companies, and the clerks of the public offices. The premium, according to the value of the stocks on the day on which the bargain was concluded, was three pounds ten shillings per cent.: but, rising considerably within a few days after, much blame was imputed to the minister, for having made so disadvantageous a bargain for the public. In vindication of himself, he allowed that the premium was certainly much greater than ought to have been given in time of peace; but he begged the house to recollect the circumstances under which he had been obliged to negotiate the loan. He had only been ten days in office. The late ministers had left the treasury without a shilling, and the public service admitted of no delay. These circumstances were well known to the money-lenders; and they had, doubtless, taken advantage of it; and as the necessity of coming to a conclusion on any terms would, by every day's delay, have been the more urgent, they would certainly have been raised upon him the nearer that period approached.—Mr. Pitt having observed, "that a letter signed by four persons of responsibility as monied men, the very four that managed the loan of last year, offering to take the loan on such terms, that those who bid lower must make a bargain for the public exceedingly advantageous indeed, was delivered to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. SHERIDAN stated, that there was no competition of the money-lenders; but that although two or three of the four who had signed the letter alluded to by Mr. Pitt, had been at Lord John Cavendish's house, when his lordship sent them in a proposal of lower terms than those which had ultimately been closed upon, they had not the virtue to accede to them, nor did they endeavor to persuade the rest to do so.

The resolution passed the committee, and was ordered to be reported.

APRIL 17.

MR. ROLLE'S MOTION FOR A COPY OF THE LIST
OF SUBSCRIBERS TO THE NEW LOAN.*Mr. Frederick Montagu having seconded the motion,*

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he was glad to see the motion seconded from the Treasury bench; if it had not been seconded by any one else, he himself would have done it with a great deal of pleasure; and though it might be imagined, from the situation he held, that he knew something of the persons to whom the loan had been parcelled out, he could assure the honorable mover of the question, that the list could not be a greater novelty to any man in that house than it would be to him; for, knowing the character and disposition of the noble lord at the head of the Exchequer, he did not venture so much as to recommend a single person to him for a share in the loan. What peculiarly rendered the present motion a matter agreeable to his mind, was the recollection of the many indirect insinuations that might create a suspicion in the minds of the public, which had been at different times, and by different speakers, thrown out in the course of the debate of the preceding day. Insinuations and surmises, whispered with an affected caution, and hinted by halves, he observed, did more towards imposing conviction on the minds of the credulous, than the most direct charge could effect. In the debate in the committee, more than one speaker had chosen to talk of the possibility of the present loan having been distributed unfairly, with a view to the exertion of parliamentary influence; or with a design to answer purposes of a less political, but of a more pernicious nature. The right honorable gentleman, in particular, who had stood forth so conspicuously as the leader of the opposition against the loan, had, in his first speech, talked in general terms of the impropriety of a reserve for ministerial allotment; and in

his subsequent speeches had said, "if the noble lord would say, he alone made the distribution; and if it had been solely the act of the noble lord," with other expressions of a sort that tended to convey a suspicion of the improper interference of other persons. It could not, therefore, but give him the most solid satisfaction, to hear a motion for a paper, which must necessarily carry with it incontrovertible evidence of the truth; and which, of course, would serve completely to acquit, not only the noble lord at the head of the Exchequer, but every other person about the Treasury. With regard to the speech just delivered by an honorable gentleman, Mr. Sheridan said, he could only conceive, from the many exceeding harsh expressions used by the honorable gentleman, that he had been absent from the house the preceding day. Had not that been the case, the honorable gentleman certainly would have had too much candor, to have stated charges of so reprehensible a nature in express terms, upon grounds that had been, as he trusted the house would allow, most amply and satisfactorily explained and refuted, in the course of the debate in the committee. Before he sat down, if he might be permitted so much egotism, in defence of himself, and in exculpation of his character, as a person, who very unworthily stood in that sort of connection with the Treasury, which rendered him liable to suspicion, he would take the liberty of assuring the house, in the most solemn manner, that he had neither directly nor indirectly interfered, in regard to the present loan.—The motion passed without opposition.

APRIL 23.

LOAN.

*Mr. Sheridan brought in a bill founded on the resolution of the committee of ways and means for raising 12,000,000*l.* by a loan.—The bill was read the first time without any opposition.*

APRIL 30.

BILL FOR TAKING UP AND IMPRISONING SUCH PERSONS AS SHOULD BE FOUND IN THE NIGHT WITH PICK-LOCK KEYS, OR OTHER IMPLEMENTS FOR BREAKING INTO HOUSES.

The bill in the form presented was disapproved by both sides of the house. Lord Mahon observed, "that a very easy method might be adopted in wording the bill, so as that the law should reach only those whose intentions were really criminal: he would suggest, for instance, that the implements meant by the bill, be described to be such only as could not be employed to any good purpose."—Upon which

Mr. SHERIDAN would object much less to the bill, if this idea of the noble lord should be adopted; but at present there was no such line drawn. The general expression of "implements for house-breaking," was all that was used; so that a ladder on a poor labourer's shoulder, might be deemed such an implement; as might also a strong shoe, because with a strong shoe a man might possibly kick a door open. He then said, that the reformation ought to begin at the source; for, until the police should be reformed, little reformation could be expected among the lower classes.

The Chairman was directed to report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

MAY 2.

DEBATE RELATIVE TO MESSRS. POWELL AND BEMBRIDGE.

These gentlemen were two principal clerks in the Pay Office, who had been dismissed for a misdemeanour, and afterwards reinstated.

Lord Newhaven, who had moved, on the 24th of April, for the minute of the treasury on this subject, said, he had been informed that prosecutions against these gentlemen had been ordered in the courts below; and if such was the fact, he would move to have the order discharged for taking the minute under consideration; because he was of opinion, no proceeding should be had in the house that might create a bias in the minds of the public, before the gentlemen had been brought to trial.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, the Attorney-General had given it as his opinion, that a prosecution for a misdemeanor should be instituted by information; and also, that another prosecution, by English bill, should be instituted in the Court of Exchequer, to compel Messrs. Powell and Bembridge to make up their accounts, and pay in their balances. He had this day spoken to the Solicitor of the Treasury; and he understood from him, that he had directions to file the bill; and that he only waited for the arrival in town of the Attorney-General, to receive his instructions, relative to the prosecution for the misdemeanor.

To this Mr. Pitt observed, "that the restoration of those gentlemen seemed to cast no small reflection on those who had been the authors of their dismissal, and on the late Attorney-General, who had given his opinion against them. He wished the order to be discharged, until the Attorney-General should come to town, and inform the house, whether he meant to proceed criminally against the gentlemen."

Mr. SHERIDAN rose again, and said, the delay of the legal proceedings against Messrs. Powell and Bembridge was by no means chargeable, as matter of censure, against the present ministry. The late Attorney-General had commenced the business; and there had time enough elapsed for him to have gone on with it. Mr. Sheridan threw out some sarcasms on the practice of that gentleman to threaten, and to institute criminal processes, and then to suffer them to sleep.

Mr. Martin having remarked, "that when he heard from the highest authority, that two considerable clerks in office had been dismissed for gross misbehaviour; and that they were afterwards restored, he could not help looking upon their restoration as a gross and daring insult to the public."—Mr. Burke, rising in a violent fit of passion, exclaimed, "it is a gross and daring"—"but he could proceed no further, for his friend, Mr. Sheridan, by this time had pulled him down to his seat, from a motive of friendship, lest his heat should betray him into some intemperate expressions that might offend the house. At length the Speaker desired the conversation might drop, as there was no question before the house."

MAY 7.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

The following resolutions were moved by Mr. Pitt:—

1st. That it was the opinion of the house that measures were highly necessary to be taken for the future prevention of bribery and expense at elections.

2nd. "That for the future, when the majority of voters for any borough, who shall be convicted of gross and notorious corruption before a select committee of that house, appointed to try the merits of any election, such borough should be disfranchized, and the minority of voters not so convicted, should be entitled to vote for the county in which such borough should be situated.

3d. "That an addition of knights of the shire, and of representatives of the metropolis, should be added to the share of the representation."

The debate continued till near two o'clock. The number of petitioners this year had decreased; only fourteen counties appeared; and most of the petitions had a very considerable number of names subscribed. The whole amount did not reach 20,000. Among the converts to the question appeared Mr. Thomas Pitt, and the Lord-Advocate of Scotland. The former made the house an offer of the voluntary surrender of his borough at Old Sarum.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he was disappointed:—the motion did not go far enough. He would, nevertheless, vote for it; but he wished that it had taken in more of the objects in general request. The shortening the duration of parliament was one of those objects, which, in his mind, was most properly pursued, as a measure tending to correct the great vice in the representation of the people—their subserviency to government in consequence of their long lease obtained from the people. Shorten that period, and unquestionably you strengthen the intercourse and connexion between the representative and the constituent; and his station being more precarious, he is likely to be attentive to his trust. Mr. Sheridan very successfully ridiculed the Lord-Advocate and Mr. T. Pitt as the new converts to Mr. W. Pitt.

The house divided on the order of the day; ayes 293; noes 149. Majority against Mr. Pitt's propositions 144.

MAY 12.

MESSRS. POWELL AND BEMBRIDGE.

A conversation between Sir George Youge, Lord Newhaven, Governor Johnstone, Mr. W. Pitt, and Mr. Sheridan, took place respecting these gentlemen, in which Mr. Sheridan observed, that it was the opinion of the Attorney-General, who was absent, that the prosecution should be continued. The conversation dropped.

MAY 19.

MESSRS. POWELL AND BEMBRIDGE.

Lord Newhaven having moved, that the order made upon the 24th of April for the treasury minutes, relating to these persons, should be discharged, as a prosecution was commenced in the courts below,

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that during the debate every speaker who had opposed the motion had said, they did not wish to prejudice Messrs. Powell and Bembridge, but to know which of the two paymasters had acted best, and with most propriety, and to procure the suspension of the cashier and accountant for the present. It was not, Mr. Sheridan said, a little remarkable, that what they all disavowed, would infallibly be effected by producing the treasury minutes; while, what they owned to be their objects, would as certainly not be attained. Mr. Sheridan illustrated this observation, by proving, that the production of the treasury minutes would necessarily, and unavoidably, bring on a discussion of the nature of the suspicion said to exist against Messrs. Powell and Bembridge, which could not fail to pollute the stream of justice. He also shewed that it could not answer the ends avowed to be the objects aimed at. With regard to Mr. Arden's declaration, that if the minutes were denied, the world would think ministers meant to screen every culprit from justice, Mr. Sheridan said, it was a little extraordinary that such an idea should be thrown

out on the present occasion, when the only part government appeared in was, that of a prosecutor; which he believed the candor of the house would admit was not the part to act, when it was the design to screen a criminal from justice.

At half-past ten the house divided; ayes (for discharging the order) 161; noes 137; majority 24.

MAY 26.

Mr. Sheridan made some motions for papers.

BUDGET TAXES.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer having stated all the taxes he meant to propose, and moved his first resolution thereon, Lord Mahon moved that the Chairman should report progress, and ask leave to sit again; but this motion his lordship afterwards withdrew, declaring that he did so, because he found ministers intended to go into an enquiry of the deficiencies; but that if they did not, he would make one to that purport on a future day.

Mr. SHERIDAN desired it might be understood, that the noble lord (Mahon) had no right to claim any merit from the part he had taken that day. The deficiencies on the former taxes had been under the contemplation of the noble lord at the head of the exchequer for some time;—a fact not resting solely on the authority of his bare assertion, but proveable from the resolutions then under consideration. The resolutions were all founded on stamp-duties; the clear inference from which was, that the customs and excise were at that time, and had been, he would declare, for some time past, under the most serious consideration of government.

Mr. Wilberforce denied this doctrine; and said, it was impossible that what the noble lord had this day proposed, could be known even to government, much less in their contemplation. He observed, in confirmation of this assertion, "that the noble lord at the head of the exchequer had never once mentioned the deficiencies on the former taxes in the course of his speech." Mr. Keith Stuart said a few words in praise of Lord Mahon.

Mr. Sheridan said, the specific proposition of the noble lord certainly was not under the consideration

of government, nor had he meant to say it was; but he should still contend, that the state of the customs and excise was, as was fairly to be inferred from the face of the resolutions on the table. Mr. Sheridan observed, that if the honorable gentleman who spoke last thought his thanks better earned by words than deeds, he did right to give them to the noble lord who had made the motion, that the chairman leave the chair. That noble lord had talked about, what by fair inference the present resolutions might be said to prove to be doing.

Here the debate ceased, and the committee agreed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's resolution.

MAY 27.

WAYS AND MEANS.

A resolution for imposing a tax on wheels having been read by the clerk, it was opposed by Sir Philip Jennings Clerke, and Lord Mahon, as a greater check on agriculture and manufactures.

Mr. SHERIDAN replied, that in the bill which was to impose this tax, such regulations might be made as should remove many of the objections that had been stated; he was sure the noble lord who had proposed the tax would not resist any one exception in favour of the farmer, that should appear reasonable; and therefore he requested gentlemen would suspend their objections until they should see the bill, and the regulations that it contained. As to the noble lord, (Mahon) who had objected to the tax, merely because a greater tax might be ingrafted on it in future, his objection appeared to him unseasonable; it might apply well enough when such greater tax should be proposed; but if even a very heavy tax indeed should be proposed hereafter, and carried, the noble lord who had objected to it, would find an opportunity of encreasing the revenue, by taking off the taxes.

Upon a division, there appeared for the tax 47; against it 20.

JUNE 3.

RECEIPTS TO STAMP DUTIES.

A short conversation took place on the bill, subjecting receipts to stamp duties. The Lord Mayor and Mr. Sawbridge wished that it might not go into a committee so soon as Thursday next, as there were to be meetings of the common council, and of the merchants on Friday.

Mr. SHERIDAN was of opinion it would be better that the bill should be committed before these meetings should take place; and his reason was this; he knew that many of the objections now entertained against the tax, would be proved to be ill-founded as soon as the bill should be read; because care had been taken so to draw it up, as to guard against the evils which afforded ground for objection; and therefore, when gentlemen should have been satisfied of this by discussion in the committee on Thursday, they would be better able to give information on the subject to the gentlemen who were to assist at the meetings that were to be held on Friday.

An order was then made for sending the bill to a committee on Thursday.

 JUNE 5.

TAX ON BILLS OF EXCHANGE, &c. AND RECEIPTS.

In the course of this debate, Mr. Sheridan replied to several questions put by members as to particular bills coming within the description of the clause—The Lord Mayor observed that the tax would be particularly hard upon laborers and the poor in general; and moved that the word "five" be inserted, exempting all receipts under £5.—Upon a division, there appeared for the Lord Mayor's motion 21; against it 26.

JUNE 11.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE UPON THE TAX
BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that the framers of the bill labored under very great disadvantages, inasmuch as they acted only from their own weak judgment; whereas the opposers of it argued against it, only because they had been instructed so to do, by persons who had never seen the bill, and were unacquainted with the various provisions it contained. He used several arguments to shew that the tax would eventually fall on the buyer, and not on the seller. He had seen a mercer, to whom this tax was odious, and yet who had no objection that a tax should be laid on wrought silks, because he could raise his price accordingly to his customers; but that the tax on receipts was obnoxious to him; for by it, the two-pence, and no more, would pass to and from his hands, without any augmentation to the public purse. For his own part, he was convinced that the tax had become odious amongst some people, only because none were to receive any benefit from it but the government, to whom it was paid. This made a great difference compared with all other taxes; for in the one, government received it all; in the others, for one shilling that was imposed by parliament, ten were imposed by the seller.

JUNE 12.

RECEIPT TAX.

The title of the bill being read, Lord Mahon moved three clauses, to be added to the bill, by way of rider; the two first, which went to the exemption of all receipts, with the words "in full of all demands" inserted therein, though for a sum less than forty shillings, from being liable to the penalty, were readily assented to. The third was to enact a limitation of time for prosecutions to recover the penalty to be commenced in cases where it was forfeited. To these latter Mr. Sheridan made some objection.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he was a little surprised that the noble lord was so ill informed, as not to know,

that as the law stood already, all prosecutions of a nature similar to those that would be commenced, if occasion required it, to recover the penalties of the present bill, were limited to twelve months; and could not be commenced after the lapse of that period. Mr. Sheridan took notice of the amendments with which the noble lord had been so good as to favor them the day before; and said, they were so extremely trifling, that it little mattered whether they were proposed or not.

After some further conversation, the clause was read; and the words "twelve months," introduced. Mr. Sheridan next proposed his new clauses; one of them imposing a duty of sixpence on all foreign bills of exchange, &c. which was agreed to. Colonel Norton having observed, that he objected to the tax, and he understood that Mr. Pitt said only that he consented to it on account of the public necessities.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to contradict this, declaring, that the right honorable gentlemen had spoken with infinite candor upon the subject; but nothing he had said, warranted such a conclusion. [Mr. Pitt nodded assent to this remark.] Mr. Sheridan observed, that after all that had passed, the matter still rested on the very issue that he had placed it on the day before; namely, on the question whether the tax would be paid by the consumer, or the retail dealer. He said, notwithstanding the two very respectable authorities cited by the honorable gentleman opposite to him, (Colonel Onslow) he meant Tully and the grocer, he was firm in his opinion, that it would be paid by the consumer; and it was evident that almost every one of the gentlemen who had asserted the contrary, had expressly said, they spoke from the instructions of others;—that they had been ordered not to be convinced by argument, and should vote as they had been directed by their constituents. Mr. Sheridan hoped the retail trader would honestly comply with the express letter of the bill, and throw the tax on the consumer; for if the consumer let the retail trader pay it, he was sure it would be charged to the consumer with addition in the price of the article purchased.

JUNE 16.

REPORT OF THE MALT COMMITTEE TO TAX
PRIVATE BREWERS.

Under the authority of an act of parliament, persons brewing beer for their own use, and not for sale, were permitted to compound with the board of excise, at so much a head in their family, for the real duty on malt they thus consumed, in consequence of which they were freed from the visits of the Excise officer; but great frauds having arisen under this power of compounding, to the great destruction of the revenue; Lord John Cavendish moved for a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the law which gives this power. In the committee a resolution was moved by his lordship, that this power of compounding ought to cease; the resolution was carried without opposition. The chairman afterwards reported it to the house; and Mr. Sheridan moved the house to agree with the committee in this resolution. It was opposed by Mr. Hill on the ground of being a partial, unproductive, oppressive, offensive, and a smuggled tax:—in the course of his speech he observed that an assurance had been held out by ministers that no such tax was intended, and that a member having enquired of Mr. Sheridan if it were really intended to be proposed, he assured him, that he did not know any thing of it.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he had told the honorable gentleman that such a tax would not make part of this year's budget; and the resolution before the house was no contradiction to that assertion; for it was not to impose a new, but to regulate an old tax; and make it less unproductive, by taking away the means through which it had hitherto in a great measure been evaded.

The resolution afterwards passed.

JUNE 17.

BILL FOR THE ABOLISHING FEES.

Mr. Pitt having moved the house to resolve itself into a committee on the bill for abolishing fees, and establishing various regulations in the offices of the Treasury, Admiralty, Ordnance, Excise, and Stamps, and of several other offices therein mentioned;—and having asked if it was the intention of ministers to continue the commission of public accounts, which would expire next July. The motion

was opposed by Lord John Cavendish.—Mr. Pitt noticed in course of the debate a remark made by Mr. Sheridan who had charged the late Board of Treasury with having created a new fee at the very time they professed to be employed in forwarding plans of economy and reform respecting office-fees in general.—He said the charge was ill founded; that the matter related to a sum claimed as a gratuity upon a contract; and which the Treasury had admitted upon grounds of custom.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, in answer to the observation of Mr. Pitt, he found by a Treasury minute, that a charge under the head of fees, having been referred to the comptroller of army accounts, he had reported to the late Treasury that it was somewhat greater than what had usually been allowed, yet the Treasury allowed it; and thus, by establishing this regulation, they would of course increase the compensation that must be made to the clerks, who should suffer by the abolition of fees.

After some further debate the speaker left the chair; and the house going into a committee, went through the bill, and afterwards adjourned.

JULY 1.

LORD SURREY'S MOTION FOR LEAVE TO BRING IN A BILL TO EXPLAIN THE THIRTY-FIRST OF ELIZABETH, CALLED "AN ACT FOR REGULATING THE ELECTION OF SCHOLARS, AND PRESENTATION TO OFFICE.

Mr. Sheridan in order to get rid of the motion, without treating it so harshly as to put a direct negative upon it, moved for the order of the day, which was carried; Lord Surrey's motion consequently fell to the ground.

Mr. SHERIDAN then stated briefly the great hardship of the case of Colonel Erskine and the Swiss officers, who had been fined in their own country and banished from it, and were now starving here. Mr. Sheridan recommended it to gentlemen to exert themselves in a committee, to en-

quire into the merits of the case, and report upon it in as few days as possible to the house. With a view to institute such enquiry, he moved, "That the East India Company do forthwith lay before this house, copies of all orders, and other papers, relative to raising a regiment on the borders of Switzerland during the last war." The same was agreed to, and ordered accordingly.

JULY 3.

BILL FOR A TAX ON REGISTERING BIRTHS AND DEATHS.

Sir Adam Ferguson said, that viewing the bill in the light of a measure, to procure a correct knowledge of the number of people in the kingdom, he thought a compulsory clause necessary; for without it, the births among Quakers, and all the different dissenting congregations, would not be ascertained.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he intended to move a clause to compel the Quakers to register the birth of their children; but as the dissenting congregations were so numerous, he was afraid they could not be very clearly, and with certainty, described in the bill.

JULY 4.

BILL FOR REGULATING CERTAIN OFFICES IN THE EXCHEQUER.

It was proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that after the interest of the present auditor and tellers of the exchequer, and of the clerk of the polls, in their respective places, should have ceased and determined, the salaries of those officers should be fixed and certain. To this Mr. Arden moved a clause exempting Lord Thurlow from the operation of the bill; His Majesty having in the year 1778 promised him, on his accepting the office of Lord Chancellor, a reversion of a tellership of the Exchequer, in as large and beneficial a manner as tellership were then enjoyed.

Mr. SHERIDAN spoke more directly against the proposed motion, than any person who had risen in

the debate. He said, the noble lord who had just sat down, had reminded the committee of a circumstance which ought not to escape their observation, but upon which he felt himself obliged to argue to a conclusion directly contrary to that drawn by his noble friend: for, so far from regarding Lord Thurlow's pension as inadequate, he had always looked on it as containing and carrying with it a compensation for the curtailed state in which the reversion of the tellership was to be given to him. That this was the case, it was only necessary to recollect arguments used on a former occasion upon the subject; but if any doubt remained, he knew no way of judging, but by having recourse to precedent, and seeing what had been given to former chancellors in expectation of the tellership. And here he found, that as great and good a character as ever held the seals,—a character respected and valued throughout the country, as highly thought of as Lord Thurlow for his abilities; and though, to his honor, very differently from his principles, had, upon his retirement, a pension only of a bare £1500. a year. Mr. Sheridan contrasted farther the merits of Lord Camden; and insisted that if it was reasonable, on the principles laid down in the debate, to countenance this extraordinary compensation to Lord Thurlow, the house would be bound in justice to consider of making a retribution to Lord Camden, for the deficiency of his income, for the space, he believed, of eleven years before the tellership had fallen to his son. But admitting that Lord Thurlow was entitled to this distinction, the manner of the reward proposed was most objectionable, for it was directly contrary to the principle of the bill upon the table, inasmuch as it was placing a person of great weight in this country, who had been one of His Majesty's confidential servants, and who might perhaps, as the wishes of the friends to the constitution might not always prevail, be so again, in such a situation

as to have a distinct and separate interest from his fellow subjects; an interest in the future wars and calamities of his country, which would be thrift and gain to him, though misery and ruin to the empire at large. Under such circumstances, Lord Thurlow might, at some future period, be called on for the sanction of his great authority to a question of war and peace. Undoubtedly the noble and learned lord had himself a soul above all mercenary considerations; though he had lately shewn, in the other house, that he gave no credit for such principles in others; but still it would be indelicate to place so high-minded a personage in such a situation of suspicion. If, however, his merit was so transcendent, and the house approved it, let the salary of the tellership in his case be doubled—but let it be fixed. Having argued this very closely, Mr. Sheridan concluded with some observations on the novel character which Lord Thurlow had lately assumed in the house of lords, of a furious reformer.

After some further debate,

Mr. SHERIDAN again rose, and stating the fact now admitted, that the promise of the tellership was an absolute bargain made by Lord Thurlow on his taking the seals, he called on Mr. Pitt to account for, and excuse his conduct, in having, while he was chancellor of the exchequer, deluded the house into an approbation of this pension, by urging, as his principal argument in defending it, the generous and magnanimous conduct of Lord Thurlow, in having, unlike his predecessors, made no stipulation whatever on his accepting the seals. Mr. Sheridan said, that to record the whole transaction properly, the patent for the reversion in question should run thus: “Whereas Edward Lord Thurlow has a pension of £2800 per annum, because he nobly disdained to make any stipulation on his becoming chancellor; and whereas, it is fit he should have the reversion of a tellership of the exchequer, be-

cause he bargained for the same, before he would take the seals."

At length, the clause being regularly moved, was agreed to without a division.

JULY 10.

MR. PITT'S MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS CONCERNING THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS.

A book, containing a list of the persons to whom sums of public money had been issued, for public services, for which no account had yet been passed by the auditors of the imprest, was laid before the house by Lord John Cavendish; and upon which Mr. Pitt made a motion for an address to His Majesty, "that it appears that large sums of money, which have at different times, and many of them very long since been paid for public services to sub-accountants, amounting in the whole to above forty-four millions, have not yet been accounted for before the auditors of the imprest; and that though many of them may have been otherwise accounted for in the course of office, yet others to a very large amount have not been accounted for at all.

"That it appears to this house to be of the utmost importance, that all public accounts should be brought forward with as little delay as possible; and that therefore they do humbly beseech His Majesty to be graciously pleased to give directions that the most effectual measures should be taken to inquire concerning the persons to whom the said sums have been issued, or their legal representatives; and particularly those to whom money has been issued in the course of the late expensive war; and to take measures, in all cases, where there shall appear to be sufficient ground, to compel them in due course of law to account for the same; and that this house will in due time co-operate in such measures as may on full deliberation appear to be proper, in order to prevent the like delays for the future."

Mr. SHERIDAN moved two amendments to the motion. The one was to leave out the words "it appears to this house," and insert in their stead the following: "this house having reason to believe;" the other to leave out the specific sum of forty-four millions, so that the phrase would run generally that great sums, &c. had been issued, and had not been accounted for. He said these amendments appeared to him the more necessary, as the book on which the motion was founded, could not be called a par-

liamentary voucher, such as would support the assertion "it appears to this house;" for, in fact, it was merely a compilation, made up indeed by a respectable individual, but at the same time unauthorised by either parliament or the treasury; and if the noble lord produced such a book at all, it was only in deference to the right honorable mover of the present address; who having seen the book, wished it to be produced to the house. But though it might serve to satisfy the curiosity of the house, it was not so authentic a document, as that a grave proceeding should be grounded upon it. The same reasoning would support the amendment for leaving out the specific sum; for if the house, and not on the authority of the book, speak with certainty on one point, they could not, of course, speak with certainty on the other. He had not the least objection to the motion, if it should be thus amended; and he was satisfied that the amendments would not, in the smallest degree, tread upon the spirit of the address.

The amendments were opposed by Mr. W. Grenville, Mr. W. Pitt, and Mr. Arden; and supported by Lord John Cavendish, and Mr. Fox.

Mr. SHERIDAN professed he had no wish but to keep the public from being deceived. He thought it right that notice should be taken of the circumstance; but not in the way proposed in the motion.

The amendments were carried without a division.

NOVEMBER 20.

LORD JOHN CAVENDISH'S MOTION, FOR LEAVE TO BRING IN A BILL TO EXPLAIN AND AMEND THE RECEIPT TAX.

Doubts had arisen whether any penalty was incurred under the act in its present form, by those who had signed receipts upon unstamped paper; and these doubts were changed into a confident idea, by the opinion of some respectable members of the law having been published in the newspapers. The tax, which previous to the promulgation of those opinions, appeared likely to be very productive,

has since fallen off. The opinion of the Attorney-General was diametrically opposite to those alluded to; and, therefore, a bill was proposed to indemnify those who had given receipts without a stamp; and so to explain the meaning of the act, as to prevent such an evasion of it for the future.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that the last speaker but two (Mr. Arden), had said that the receipt-tax was oppressive and unpopular; and that when it should be known, complaints would pour in against it from every quarter. It was a little singular that a tax should be oppressive, which was not felt; and that it should be unpopular when it was not known. In the country, an honorable baronet (Sir Edward Astley), had said, it had been hardly heard of; and in the town it had been, since the publication of certain authorities, pretty generally evaded. As to the penalty of signing a receipt on unstamped paper, he remembered well to have stated in the committee, when the matter was under consideration, it was intended that such an act should be made penal; and he wished that whenever the learned member who spoke last (Lord John Cavendish), should be called upon again, along with other gentlemen of the law (Oliver Quid, and others), to give an opinion on a statute on which the existence of a considerable branch of the revenue depended, he would give less way to vivacity, and read all the clauses, before he let his opinion get abroad into the world; where such an opinion as his could not fail to carry great weight.

Mr. Arden having retorted on Mr. Sheridan with some acrimony, and defended, in a high tone of voice, his opinion,

Mr. SHERIDAN got up a second time, and said, he should not adopt the warmth of the honorable member; because he found, by the experience of its having not the least effect, when used by another, it might probably be of as little service if he took it as his mode of defence. But again he reprobated the sending forth an opinion, calculated to affect

the revenue, without the decency of reading the act on which it was founded.

The question was at last put on the motion for leave to bring in the bill, which was carried without a division.

DECEMBER 4.

ALDERMAN NEWNHAM'S MOTION FOR A REPEAL OF THE STAMP DUTY ON RECEIPTS.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he was very glad to hear it generally admitted, that when gentlemen thought fit to move the repeal of an existing tax, they ought to propose some tax in lieu of it ; that in their opinion, at least, was likely to prove equally productive. This was certainly right, because when that house was called upon, as it was by the motion then under consideration, it was called upon to do as strong an act as the house could possibly perform, viz. to change the security given to the public creditor, and to take away the mortgage he held in payment of the interest of his money. The receipt tax, Mr. Sheridan said, was a tax that had passed almost unanimously. At least it had been approved of by the majority of that house, and declared to be a light, impartial, and wise tax. Such, he was in his own mind persuaded, it would have proved, had the tax had fair play. It had not, however, been yet truly tried. No sooner was this tax, so much liked within doors, heard of, but the utmost pains were taken to raise a clamour against it without. Committees and associations were formed for that purpose expressly. All the art and ingenuity of man were employed in finding out means of evading it. Remonstrances against it had been fabricated, and carried from house to house to procure signatures. Those who never had heard of the tax, were called upon to lend their names to the list ; nay, one man, who could not write himself,

had been invited to make his mark, in order to overthrow a tax, which he was told materially concerned him, as it was a check to the currency of written evidence. As soon as any probable means of evading it were hit on, they were industriously circulated throughout the kingdom; and government having, out of lenity, forborne to prosecute for the penalties incurred by those who flew in the face of the act, a case was made out of the whole against the tax itself; and, when parliament met, it was applied to, in order to repeal the tax. Mr. Sheridan reprobated such conduct, and said, he trusted that the good sense of the house would interpose, and prevent the repeal of a tax so treated. With regard to the taxes suggested by the honorable gentleman who spoke last, they appeared to him to be full as liable to objection as the receipt tax,—indeed, infinitely more so, because there was not any fixed criterion to judge of them by. For instance, suppose a tax was laid on dogs, in that case the keeper of a pack might immediately sell it, and buy a hunter with the money, and follow the pack of some neighbour. In like manner, if a person kept dogs to guard his house, on a tax being laid, he might dispose of his dogs, and resort to some other means of security. So, likewise, with regard to pews, in order to evade the payment of a tax upon them, persons might no longer choose to hold them. The tax on grave-stones, indeed, was not easily evaded, and could not be deemed oppressive, as it would only be once paid; but such was the spirit of clamor against any tax on receipts, that he should not wonder if it extended to them; and that it should be asserted, that persons having paid the last debt, the debt of nature, government had resolved they should pay a receipt tax, and have it stamped over their grave. Nay, with so extraordinary a degree of inveteracy were some committees in the city, and elsewhere, actuated, that if a receipt tax of the nature in question

was enacted, he should not be greatly surprised if it were soon after published, that such committees had unanimously resolved that they would never be buried, in order to avoid paying the tax; but had determined to lie above ground, or have their ashes consigned to family urns, in the manner of the ancients. Having diverted the house with this idea, which he handled with equal point and pleasantry, Mr. Sheridan resorted to more serious argument, and took notice of Mr. Thornton's remarks, relative to a clerk's salary being forty pounds a year, and that came to two-pence an hour, which he pointed out as absurd. He also remarked upon what had fallen from Mr. Martin, who had said, that the retail trader distributed his price of the receipt upon the several articles he sold. The strongest argument urged against the tax, Mr. Sheridan said, he had ever conceived to be, that it fell heavier upon the retail trader, than upon the wholesale dealer or merchant. If, however, the honorable gentleman's remark was true, this argument necessarily fell to the ground. Mr. Sheridan said, in his mind, the great recommendation of the receipt tax was, that being paid directly, and not immediately, the public felt it; and it naturally led them to consider the state of the nation. This was the excellence of the tax, and a right principle of taxation. If he might presume to lay down a principle of taxation, as fit to be adopted in an arbitrary and in a free country, taxes should be imposed as indirectly as possible; and the giving alarm to mens' feelings ought to be most studiously avoided. The reverse exactly should be the case in a free country; the taxes there ought always to be direct and open. The subject, when he paid any of them, should know that he paid a tax; and his attention should in consequence be provoked to an examination of the state of the country's debts, the weight of which being obliged to be borne by all, they necessarily concerned all in an equal degree.

DECEMBER 8.

**THIRD READING OF THE BILL FOR VESTING
THE AFFAIRS OF THE EAST INDIA COM-
PANY IN THE HANDS OF CERTAIN COMMIS-
SIONERS, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PRO-
PRIETORS AND PUBLIC.**

Mr. SHERIDAN replied to the Lord Advocate (Mr. Dundas), went through the principal parts of his bill of last year with him ; and contended, that the despotism it clothed Lord Cornwallis with, was so plain and palpable, that he declared he wondered how the learned gentleman could keep his countenance when he seriously insisted upon it, that his bill was not equally dangerous in point of creating influence and arbitrary power, and in regard to invasion of chartered rights, with that of his right honorable friend. It was, in fact, Mr. Sheridan said, ten times more so ; and that if it had not been so late an hour of the night, he would then have proceeded to prove it was so. This serious part of his argument over, Mr. Sheridan came to the more pleasant part, and took up the several quotations from Shakespeare, Milton, and the book of Revelations ; of Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Arden, and Mr. Scott, foiling them each with their own weapons, and citing, with the most happy ease and correctness, passages from almost the same pages that controverted their quotations, and told strongly for the bill. He quoted three more verses from the Revelations, by which he metamorphosed the beast with seven heads, with crowns on them, into seven angels, cloathed in pure and white linen. One side of the house were extremely entertained with the turns Mr. Sheridan gave what he quoted.

Ayes 208 ; noes 102.

Mr. Fox's celebrated East India Bill having passed, on the 8th of December the house of commons was, on the next day, carried up to the house of lords. No symptoms had hitherto appeared before

the public, that indicated the approaching fall of the bill, and the ministers. Great pains indeed were taken, and with considerable success, by an almost incredible circulation of pamphlets and political engravings, to influence the nation against the measures and persons of administration. And it was also remarked, that in the house of commons, several of that description of members, well known by the name of King's friends, gave their votes on the side of opposition. But it was generally imagined, that as, on the one hand, the ministry was too strong to be shook by the breath of popular clamour; so, on the other, it seemed to the last degree improbable, that they should have adopted a measure of such infinite importance, either without knowing, or contrary to, the inclinations of the King. On the first reading of the bill in the house of lords, Earl Temple, Lord Thurlow, and the Duke of Richmond, expressed their abhorrence of the measure in the strongest and most unqualified terms. A brilliant panegyric on Mr. Hastings was pronounced by Lord Thurlow; and the flourishing state of the Company's affairs insisted on. After a short debate relative to the production of papers, on which the lords in opposition did not chuse to divide the house, the second reading was fixed for Monday, December 15. In the mean time, various rumours began to circulate relative to some extraordinary motions in the interior of the court. It was confidently affirmed, that on the 11th of December, the King signified to Earl Temple, who had been ordered to attend him in the closet for that purpose, his disapprobation of the India Bill; and authorised him to declare the same to such persons as he might think fit:—that a written note was put into his hands, in which His Majesty declared, “that he should deem those who should vote for it, not only not his friends, but his enemies;—and that if he (Lord Temple) could put this in stronger words, he had full authority to do so.” And, lastly, that in consequence of this authority, communications had been made to the same purport to several peers in the upper house, and particularly to those whose offices obliged them to attend the King's person. Some extraordinary circumstances, which happened on the 15th of December, the day of the second reading of the Bill, confirmed the probability of the truth of these reports. Several lords, who had entrusted their proxies to the minister, and his friends, withdrew them only a few hours before the house met; and others, whose support he had every reason to expect, gave their votes on the side of opposition. On the division, which took place on a question of adjournment, the ministers were left in a minority of 79 to 87.—On the 17th of December, the India Bill was rejected by the lords, on a division of 95 to 76. It was remarked, that the Prince of Wales, who was in the minority on the former division, having learned, in the interim, that the measure was offensive to the King, was absent on this occasion. At twelve o'clock, on the following night, a messenger delivered to the two secretaries of state, His Majesty's orders, “that they should deliver up the seals of their offices, and send them by the under Secretaries, Mr. Frazer and Mr. Nepean, as a personal interview on the occasion would be disagreeable to him.”—The seals were immediately given by

the King to Lord Temple, who sent letters of dismissal, the day following, to the rest of the cabinet council; at the same time Mr. Wm. Pitt was appointed first lord of the treasury, and chancellor of the exchequer; and Earl Gower president of the council. On the 22d, Lord Temple resigned the seals of his office; and they were delivered to Lord Sidney, as secretary of state for the home department, and to the Marquis of Carmarthen for the foreign. Lord Thurlow was appointed lord chancellor; the Duke of Rutland, lord privy seal; Lord Howe, first lord of the Admiralty; and the Duke of Richmond, master-general of the ordnance. Mr. Wm. Grenville and Lord Mulgrave succeeded Mr. Burke in the pay office; Mr. Henry Dundas was appointed treasurer of the navy; Mr. Kenyon, attorney-general; Mr. Arden, solicitor-general; Sir Geo. Yonge, secretary at war; Mr. Rose and Mr. Steele, secretaries to the treasury; and Mr. Orde, secretary to the lord lieutenant of Ireland.

JANUARY 12, 1784.

COMMITTEE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION.

As soon as the Speaker had taken the chair, Mr. Fox, in order to get possession of the house, and to prevent any other business from being brought forward by the minister, before certain resolutions that had been prepared were discussed in the committee on the state of the nation, moved for the order of the day. He was here interrupted by the new members who were brought up to be sworn; and as soon as that business was over, the Chancellor of the Exchequer rose at the same moment with Mr. Fox, declaring he had a message to deliver from the king. A great clamour immediately arose in the house who should be heard first, which was at length ended by the Speaker's deciding in favor of Mr. Fox. The question, whether the house should resolve itself into a committee on the state of the nation was then debated. The grounds on which this was opposed by the minister and his friends, were the violent and unprecedented measures adopted by the committee on a former occasion; and the little probability that appeared from the present temper of the house, that their proceedings would in future be conducted with less violence and passion; as parliament stood pledged, as well from the duty they owed their country, as by their own solemn declaration, to direct their attention, without delay, to the affairs of the East India Company. Mr. Pitt implored the house to postpone, at least for a short time, the introduction of measures that might retard or throw any difficulties in the way of this important consideration. He said he was then ready to bring forward his plan for the better regulation of the company's affairs; and that he challenged a comparison between his, and the bill lately rejected by the lords; and that he desired to stand or fall by the merits or demerits of the measures he should propose. In answer to these arguments, it was denied

that either the resolutions already agreed to by the committee, or those which it was intended to propose, were violent or unparliamentary---unprecedented in the latter journals of parliament they undoubtedly were, and for good reasons, because, since the time of the revolution, the dignity and essential rights of that house had never before suffered so open and direct an attack. It had been asserted by many great lawyers, and amongst those by Lord Somers himself, that the crown did not possess the prerogative of dissolving parliament during a session while public business and petitions were pending. But without contending about the question of right, it was strenuously maintained, that the exercise of such a power, in the present instance, would be highly dangerous and criminal; and that the committee was fully justified in taking such steps as they might think the most effectual for the prevention of such a calamity. The circumstances of the case called for an open and unqualified declaration of their sentiments; and did not admit of that distant and respectful delicacy which parliament usually adopted, when it thought proper to interfere, by its advice, with the executive government. A bill, the result of the most laborious investigations that had ever been carried on in parliament, had passed the house of commons with the warmest approbation of great and independent majorities. His Majesty had been advised to conceal from his ministers his disapprobation of the bill till it was carried into the house of lords, where, through means of an unconstitutional use of the royal name and influence it was rejected. The ministers who brought it in were dismissed from the public service, for no other apparent reason, than because they had been supported in that measure, and were believed to possess the confidence of that house; and, lastly, menaces of dissolution were held over the house itself, for the purpose of awing them into an acquiescence in the measures of the new administration. Under such circumstances it was impossible the house should not feel, and feeling not express their indignation and resentment. The affairs of India were certainly of the most urgent and pressing nature, but it was absolutely necessary, in order to give the subject a free and unbiassed consideration, that the house should not be left dependent for its very existence upon the will of the person whose propositions relative thereto they were about to decide upon. The minister was therefore called upon, if he wished to put a stop to such further measures as the committee might think necessary to adopt for their own security, to give the house some satisfactory assurance that no dissolution would take place. Mr. Pitt positively refused to comply with this requisition, declaring "that he would never compromise the royal prerogative, nor bargain it away in the house of commons;" and in the course of the debate accused Lord North of acting both meanly and hypocritically.

Mr. SHERIDAN attacked Mr. Pitt in terms of great severity. He said, if the right honorable gentleman applied hard words to other gentlemen, he

should take the liberty of attacking him with the same weapons. The right honorable gentleman had behaved that day not only with the utmost hypocrisy and meanness, but had held the most insulting language, and the most unconstitutional he had ever heard. He reminded the house of Mr. Banks's words before the recess, when he had pledged himself to the house, as he declared, by the authority of the right honorable gentleman, that there should be no dissolution nor prorogation of parliament; and had said, his right honorable friend not only would not himself advise any such measure, but would hold himself bound to quit his office, if any such measure was adopted by his colleagues. Mr. Sheridan reminded the house also, that Mr. Banks had desired to be furnished with stronger language to express what he said to the house, if the house were not satisfied with his words. Mr. Sheridan also attacked Mr. Dundas with considerable poignancy of wit and humour. After answering the serious parts of his argument, he touched upon the pleasant points of his speech, and said it was so unusual for the learned gentleman to indulge himself in merriment, that he presumed the success that had attended the arts practised to corrupt the majority during the recess, had given him a new flow of spirits, and encouraged him to think he should keep his place. The learned gentleman seemed to be in better humour with newspapers than usual; his speech, he said, might fairly be deemed hints for paragraphs and sketches for prints. He did not doubt but his hint was already taken; and that the next morning they would see the print he had recommended. He hoped, however, they would be favoured with a companion; and that another figure, a striking likeness of the learned gentleman would be engraved, with a scroll out of his mouth, on which should be written "appeal to the people." Another print might also contain a similar figure, and underneath might be wrote "an advocate for chartered rights," which might be

symbolically expressed by his holding his own India bill in his hand. After diverting the house excessively with these and other laughable ideas, Mr. Sheridan returned to seriousness, and read a passage from the journals in the reign of Charles II. to shew that secret influence then prevailed; and what was not a little remarkable, he said, was, the agent's name was Temple; but he happened to be only in progress to nobility; and was a simple baronet, not a peer. He went at considerable length into the question at issue between the prerogative of the crown and the privileges of the commons; and illustrated by several very apt and beautiful examples, the new idea of Mr. Fox, that the practice of our constitution was more perfect than the theory.

The majority, who were now persuaded that the new administration were only to be withheld by their fears, from putting an end to the session, resolved to render such a step highly dangerous at least, if not impossible. With this view, as soon as the question for reading the order of the day was carried, on a division of 232 to 193, and the speaker had left the chair, the two following resolutions were moved in the committee, and passed without a division.—1st. That it is the opinion of this committee, that for any person or persons in His Majesty's Treasury or in the Exchequer, or in the Bank of England, employed in the payment of the public money, to pay, or direct or cause to be paid, any sum or sums of money, for or towards the support of the services voted in this present session of parliament, after the parliament shall have prorogued or dissolved, if it be prorogued or dissolved before any act of parliament shall have passed appropriating the supplies to such services, will be a high crime and misdemeanor, a daring breach of the public trust, derogatory to the fundamental privileges of parliament, and subversive of the constitution of this country.”—2nd. “That it is the opinion of this committee, that the chairman of the committee be directed to move the house, that the bill for punishing mutiny and desertion, and for the better payment of the army and their quarters, be read a second time on Thursday the 23d of February next.”

The immediate dissolution of parliament being thus far rendered impracticable, two resolutions of a more direct and hostile nature were moved by the Earl of Surrey. The first, “That in the present situation of His Majesty's dominions, it was peculiarly necessary that there should be an administration which

had the confidence of that house and the public." It was objected to this resolution that the name of His Majesty had been perhaps accidentally and certainly very improperly omitted; and it was proposed by Mr. Dundas to amend the motion by inserting instead of the words, "*this house and the public,*" the following, "*the crown, the parliament, and the people.*" As this amendment was merely proposed for the purpose of pointing out the factious spirit of the resolution, it was rejected without a division. The second resolution—"That the late changes in His Majesty's councils had been immediately preceded by dangerous and universal reports, that the sacred name of the king had been unconstitutionally used to affect the deliberations of parliament; and that the appointments made were accompanied by circumstances new and extraordinary, and such as did not conciliate or engage the confidence of that house." The fact principally insisted upon as the ground of this resolution was, the rumor respecting the communication from the king to several peers, touching the India bill, through Earl Temple. In answer to those who required some further proof of this transaction, it was remarked, that the fact would only be known to three parties,—to the peers to whom the communication was made,—to the great personage from whom it came:—and to the noble earl who conveyed it. That it was not to be supposed the first should come voluntarily forward to divulge what might be considered as a confidential conversation with the certainty of incurring the severest displeasure of the court. That if it were false, it might reasonably have been expected that the ministers then in office would have received authority from His Majesty to contradict a report so injurious to the honor of the crown; but at all events, that the noble earl was bound, when he heard that the house was proceeding upon those reports to come forward and clear himself. Another fact was related to the Committee by General Ross, which though denied by a near relation of the party in the house, and never substantiated so fully as to ground any further proceedings thereon, yet appeared to have great weight in the determinations of the members. The matter was, that a few days before, one of the lords of His Majesty's bed-chamber, whom he afterwards named to be the Earl of Galloway, had desired to see him at his house, where he told him that if he voted against the new administration that day, he would be considered as an enemy to the king.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he thought it right to inform the honorable general that he ought not to mention the name of the noble lord in a committee; he could only do it in the house. Mr. Sheridan declared, he by no means approved of those who had been adverse to every thing fair and reasonable,

all of a sudden turning short, and affecting great earnestness to promote inquiry. With regard to the motion, he said it was absolutely necessary. Why did not the noble earl, who had been so often alluded to of late, come fairly within the bar, as other noble lords had done at different periods of our history before him, and fulfil the promise given to that house by an honorable gentleman, (his relation) a few weeks since; when it had been declared, that he had given back the seals he had received, into His Majesty's hands, and returned to a private station, in order to make himself completely amenable to any inquiries into his conduct that house might think proper to institute? The noble earl might in that situation have an opportunity of fully clearing his character, by answering to such questions as should be put to him on the veracity of a gentleman;—he would not say on the honour of a nobleman, because he might then be suspected of meaning to utter a satire on the peerage.

After a warm debate on the latter motion in which the most pointed personalities were cast and retorted from both sides of the house, at seven in the morning the committee divided.—For the motion 196 ; against it 54.

JANUARY 16.

COMMITTEE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION.

The resolution which passed on the 12th of January, would probably at any other period, have operated directly against the ministry; but the stake was too deep to be hastily thrown away; and an attempt was therefore made to evade the consequences of that vote, by considering it as too generally worded, to convey any direct censure on the members of the present administration. In order therefore to bring this point to a more direct issue, the following resolution was moved by Lord Charles Spencer in the Committee on the state of the nation.—“That it having been declared to be the opinion of this house, that in the present situation of His Majesty's dominions, it is peculiarly necessary there should be an administration that has the confidence of this house, and of the public; and that the appointments of His Majesty's present ministers were accompanied by circumstances new and extraordinary; and such as do not conciliate or

engage the confidence of this house; the continuance of the present ministers in trusts of the highest importance and responsibility, is contrary to constitutional principles, and injurious to the interests of His Majesty and his people.

Mr. SHERIDAN very ably supported the motion; and reminded Mr. Powys of his having used this quotation from Shakespeare, the day or two before Lord North retired two years ago:

————— the times have been
That, when the brains were out, the man would die
And there an end; —————

Mr. Sheridan said, the souls of the present ministry were departed; but their bodies, like empty forms, still kept their places: to them he might say—

————— the times have been
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now they rise again
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools; —————

threatening the house with fifty deaths or dissolutions.

The chairman having put the question, and the committee divided; ayes (for the resolution) 205; noes 184; majority 21.

JANUARY 23.

The rejection of Mr. Pitt's India bill, which took place this day, was generally considered as the concluding act of the present house of commons. As soon as the division was over, the minister was desired to give the house some satisfaction respecting a measure in which they were so nearly concerned; and, on his remaining silent, a loud and general call was repeated from every part of the house. At length some harsh expressions used by General Conway, relative to his conduct, obliged him to rise; but, after some warm remonstrances on the treatment he had received, he concluded with a flat refusal to answer to the interrogatories that were put to him. Several of the members who usually voted with him, now joined in the general request, but in vain.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that since the minister appeared to persist in a sort of obstinate and

sullen silence, it became the house to advert to one very material consideration; and that was, that the deputy clerk of the crown should be restricted from showing any degree of partiality to those who were with or against the treasury, in issuing the writs which would be necessary in case of a dissolution of parliament. He would therefore move, that Harry Howard, Esq. deputy clerk of the crown, or his substitute, appear at the bar of the house this day. He said this, because in fact he knew not what other day to mention.

Mr. Sheridan's motion was put and carried.

Mr. Eden was now preparing to move a resolution, the purport of which was, that the conduct of Mr. Pitt was disrespectful to His Majesty and to the house; when Mr. Fox rose and observed that perhaps Mr. Pitt imagined, because he had insulted the house so far, he might insult it still farther. He was, however, averse from taking any rash or improper advantage of him. He would therefore allow him to think of his situation for some time; and it being two o'clock, would move to adjourn to this day at twelve, at which time he hoped measures might be taken to irradiate the honor and assert the privilege of the house.—Adjourned.

FEBRUARY 3.

CENSURE ON MINISTERS.

Mr. Sheridan had moved for the attendance (on this day) of some of the officers belonging to the signet office, in order that some resolutions might be taken for the better preventing the issuing of writs in such a manner as would give some candidates a preference over others. This motion was agreed to; and the temper of the house seemed to be such, that any resolution tending to throw a difficulty in the way of a dissolution would have been carried by a great majority.

On the 2d of February a resolution had been moved by Mr. Coke, which had for its object the reprehension of Mr. Pitt's refusal to resign, declaring "that the continuance of the present ministers in office was an obstacle to the forming a firm, efficient, extended, and united administration." This was carried by a majority of 19; and on the following day Mr. Coke moved that the resolution should be laid before His Majesty. Lord Mulgrave warmly opposed the motion.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, the noble lord had laid down a principle some days ago, which prevented him from being surprised at any thing the noble lord should advance. He stated, that in the appointment of ministers, the crown ought not to consider beforehand whether they should be able to obtain the support of the house of commons. It has frequently been said, that when there was a good understanding between the ministers of the crown and the house of commons, there was ground for apprehending that they were under the influence of corruption ; but at present the noble lord might rejoice, for there was not now the least room for apprehending that the house was in danger of being corrupted by keeping up too good an understanding with the ministers of the crown, who were now at open variance with the house. If the ministers and the house of commons were closely united, the noble lord might possibly call their union adultery ; but when the ministers and the house of lords were united in the same bands, his lordship would probably call that union a legal marriage. As to what the noble lord had quoted about Lord Somers, it was not at all applicable to the present case ; for Lord Somers, on the occasion alluded to, stood upon very different ground from that of the present ministers : there was an impeachment in one case, and none in the other. The right honorable gentleman at the head of His Majesty's councils had on a former day said, that he stood firm in the fortress of the constitution ; but could any fortress be called the fortress of the constitution, which was not garrisoned by the house of commons ? They were the natural defenders of the fort. There might possibly be indeed a lieutenant-governor of the fort, who, though he did not mix in the battle, was not less the commander, though his orders were not publicly delivered. The house of commons ought to inspect the works, and see that no sap was carrying on

which might dismantle it. The present ministers were laboring to erect a fabric, that might shield them against every attack ; but they were erecting it on ground that was already undermined ; and however strong the pillars might be—however solid and firm the buttresses—however well turned the arches ; yet as the foundation must be weak, when the ground was undermined, not only the building could not stand, but the very weight of it would precipitate its fall. Secret influence was what undermined the whole ;—it constituted a fourth estate in the constitution ; for it did not belong to the king, it did not belong to the lords, it did not belong to the commons. The lords disclaimed it, and the commons found themselves thwarted by it in all their operations. An honorable member had asked if the coalition of the right honorable gentleman with the noble lord had not lessened the confidence of his friends in the former.—He would endeavor to give as satisfactory an answer as he could to this question. When the idea of a coalition with the noble lord was first started, he confessed that he had advised his right honorable friend not to accept of it ; and his reason was this :—his right honorable friend had great popularity, which he might lose by a coalition ; respectable friends, whom he might disgust ; and prejudices of the strongest nature to combat. He made no doubt but similar objections occurred to the friends of the noble lord ; and that they were urged to him, in order to dissuade him from coalescing with his right honorable friend. Mutual diffidence between men long accustomed to oppose one another, might naturally be expected. The prejudices of the public all concurred to prevent this coalition. The middling class of people, for whom he had the highest respect, and to whom the house of commons must look for support in every emergency, sooner than to the great, were not certainly the best qualified to judge of nice and refined points of politics. Accustomed to judge of

measures by men, he apprehended that they would give themselves no time to examine the principles, motives, and grounds of a coalition: but condemn it on its first appearance, merely because it was composed of men who had long been political enemies. On these grounds, full of apprehension for the character of his right honorable friend, he most certainly gave him his advice against a coalition. But when the necessities of the times at last pointed it out as the only means of salvation to this country; when, from the opportunities he had had of seeing the noble lord and his friends, and proving the honor, fairness, openness, and steadiness of their conduct, not only he did not condemn the coalition, but he rejoiced that it had taken place in spite of even his own advice; diffidence soon gave way to the most perfect reliance on the honor of the noble lord, and on that of his friends; and their steady adherence to those principles which had been laid down as the basis of the coalition. It was unnecessary, therefore, after saying this, that he should tell the house his confidence in his right honorable friend had not felt the smallest diminution. Fully acquainted with his character, he knew that he looked down with indifference, if not with contempt, on riches, places, and dignities, as things by no means necessary to his happiness. It was his right honourable friend's ambition to deserve and preserve the esteem and confidence of his friends; and he was sure that he would sacrifice neither, for all that place and emolument could bestow upon him. Having said so much in defence of the coalition, he could not help expressing his surprise that he heard so much about it from the other side of the house; and the more he looked at the treasury bench, the more his astonishment grew upon him;—for there the gentlemen who were actually sitting upon it, were divided into parts; each of whom was composed of a member who had supported the noble lord in the blue riband, and of

another who had opposed him. Those gentlemen, speaking to each other, might thus address each other: one might say, "I supported Lord North through the whole of his administration, but left him at last, when I found he had formed a coalition with that abominable man Charles Fox." The other might reply, "And I joined Mr. Fox for many years in his opposition to government; till at last I found it necessary to abandon him, when he disgraced himself by a coalition with that abominable man Lord North." If the state of the public credit, and the funds, should become the subject of discussion in that house, one of the members of the treasury bench may very probably say, "It was the cursed American war of Lord North that brought this ruin upon our funds;"—this would instantly call up his friend on the same bench; who would immediately reply, "No;—the American war was a just and constitutional war; it was the opposition given to it by the rebel-encourager Charles Fox, who caused the failure of it; and this brought ruin on the country." Thus a treasury, formed on anti-coalition principles, was itself a chain of coalitions. The grand coalition, which was the butt of every man's invective, had begot other coalitions; but there was this difference between the parent and the offspring; that, with the former, all was harmony, concord, and union; while the latter retained the heterogeneous principles of their original opposition, which made them still a prey to discord and confusion. An honorable gentleman had said that the majority in the coalition was formed of persons who represented the rotten treasury boroughs; and who were brought in by the noble lord in the blue riband, when he was at the head of the treasury. But that reproach was ill founded;—for the coalition had been purged of such members; some of whom having spurned the hand that made them, and turned their backs on their friend and benefactor, had found a happy asylum in the bosom of

administration. From this subject turning to another, Mr. Sheridan observed, that if it was improper to interfere by any means with the exercise of the prerogative, the house was to blame for having agreed to the resolution which passed yesterday unanimously; which stated that a firm, efficient, extended, and united administration was necessary in the present state of affairs. For supposing such an administration was now formed, what might not the advocates for the prerogative of the crown infer from it? That nothing could be more dangerous or more unconstitutional than such an administration; for being composed of all the heads of parties in both houses, they would of course be supported by majorities in both; and then the King would have forced upon him an administration which he could not dismiss.

The Solicitor-General accused a member of having some few days ago, used harsh and indecent language to Mr. Pitt, and which might justify retaliation.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that if the honorable gentleman, in stating that harsh and indecent words had been used by him, some time ago, to the right honorable gentleman, meant any allusion to any thing that had fallen from him, he wished he had quoted his words;—the honorable gentleman had a convenient, if not an accurate memory. What he said in allusion to the great Duke of Buckingham was, that those persons who owed their promotion to the personal favors of the crown, and stood on the principle of favoritism, were minions of the crown. The right honorable gentleman appearing to him to stand on that principle, he had, in very proper parliamentary language, called him one of the minions of the crown.

The Solicitor-General said he did not allude to Mr. Sheridan, but to another member. On a division there appeared for the motion 211; against it 187; majority against the minister 24.

FEBRUARY 20.

MR. POWYS'S MOTION, THAT THE KING WILL COMPLY WITH THE WISHES OF HIS COMMONS.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer having informed the house, on the 18th, that His Majesty had not thought proper to dismiss his ministers, and that his ministers had not resigned, Mr. Powys this day moved an address, to express "the reliance of the house on His Majesty's royal wisdom, that he would take such measures as might tend to give effect to the wishes of his faithful commons, which had been already most humbly presented to His Majesty."

Mr. Sheridan warmly supported the motion; and the address was carried by a majority of 21.

FEBRUARY 25.

On this day it was moved by Lord Beauchamp, and seconded by Mr. Sheridan, that the house, at its rising, should adjourn to the 27th, in order that their proceedings should be considered with peculiar deliberation and temper.—The question being put, it was carried unanimously.

FEBRUARY 27.

The answer of His Majesty was this day reported, in which, after assuring the house of his earnest desire to put an end to the divisions and distractions of the country; he declared, that he could not see it would in any degree be advanced by the dismissal of those at present in his service, &c.—Lord Beauchamp moved, that the answer should be taken into consideration on the 1st of March; and on a division, the numbers were, ayes 175, noes 168.—In the course of the debate, the ministerial side of the house having animadverted very warmly on the former adjournment,

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that the late adjournment had not been proposed without the knowledge of a worthy alderman of the city of London, Mr. Alderman Townshend, much in the interest and confidence of the present minister; and that gentleman, on being asked, said he had no objection to the adjournment.

On the 1st of March, a second address was made to His Majesty, to dismiss his ministers.—The reply of the King, similar to the for-

mer, was taken into consideration on the 8th; and a further representation made to His Majesty, which was equally unsuccessful.—On the 24th, Parliament was prorogued, and the day following, dissolved by proclamation.

JUNE 8.

FARTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE WESTMINSTER ELECTION.

At the late general election, Lord Hood, Mr. Fox, and Sir Cecil Wray, offered themselves as candidates to represent the city of Westminster in Parliament. The first of these gentlemen was elected by a very large majority. The struggle between the two last was long, and obstinate. After continuing the contest for upwards of six weeks, it was finally concluded, the 17th of May, 1784, leaving a majority of 235 voters in favor of Mr. Fox. The high bailiff, at the requisition of Sir C. Wray, granted a scrutiny into the pole he had taken on the day it closed, and which was the day previous to the return of his writ. This mode of proceeding was formally protested against, on the spot, by Mr. Fox, and also by several of the electors. Immediately on the meeting of the new parliament, the conduct of the high bailiff, in granting the scrutiny under the circumstances above mentioned, was warmly taken up by opposition, and as warmly defended by the minister and his friends. After the subject had been debated, as well by counsel at the bar of the house, as by the members themselves, in every shape, the proceeding of the high bailiff was justified; and it was resolved, by a very considerable majority, on the motion of Lord Mulgrave, that the high bailiff should proceed in the scrutiny.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he hoped the house was not unreasonable enough to expect him to reply to the reasoning or argument of the speech they had just heard (Mr. Pitt's); in which, from the beginning to the end, he defied the most discerning man in that auditory, to discover one syllable of argument or reason. If government could be vindicated by an avowal of its interposition in the Westminster election, it was certainly vindicated.—If the high bailiff could be justified from the circumstance of his right honorable friend's giving a vote upon the Middlesex election in 1768 (at a time of life, when a learned gentleman over the way (the Master of the Rolls) tells the house, that his right honorable friend

was disqualified from exercising the rights of a member of parliament by minority) the high bailiff is certainly justified.—If the impression made by his right honorable friend's speech could be effaced by hard words, and lofty sounds, its effect would be to the full as slight and trifling, even as the effect of the right honorable gentleman's own speech.—If severity of epithet, if redundancy of egotism, if pomp of panegyric upon administration, could refute the arguments of the most convincing speech (Mr. Fox's) he had ever the good fortune to hear, undoubtedly it was very completely refuted. But, if the people of England looked for the defence of the high bailiff of Westminster, and of His Majesty's ministers (who were in this case synonymous) upon principles of law, justice, good sense, or equity, beyond all doubt they were disappointed. He said, the idea that no harm would ensue from establishing the precedent, that would grow out of the decision of the house, if the high bailiff were ordered to continue the scrutiny, was the weakest he had ever heard suggested. To say, that the high bailiff's reasons, whenever he did not obey the sheriff's precept, and punish him, if he did not assign very good reasons for his conduct, afforded but little satisfaction. Was it to be supposed, if the high bailiff was advised by the friends of the court to make an historical return while acting without doors, and followed that advice, that he would not find friends of the court enough within doors to hold him harmless, and protect him from punishment, when he came to the bar to answer for what he had done? Mr. Sheridan complained of Mr. Pitt's having used his right honorable friend unhandsomely, in talking of a candidate, whose political conduct and principles had rendered him detestable to the people. Such language might be allowed in the mouth of a new member, just come from his constituents, who had filled his ears with expressions of that gross and vulgar nature; but from the right honorable gentleman, who must know that nothing but

the heat and passion of the times could excuse such phrases being used by any gentleman, it surely was highly unjustifiable. Besides, the right honorable gentleman, he was persuaded, was not sincere in his words; he must have both a personal and a political confidence in his right honorable friend, or he must either be insincere in what he had said then, or in what he had said on a former occasion. Let the house recollect, that the right honorable gentleman had courted an union with his right honorable friend a few months since, and had professed himself extremely desirous of effecting such a junction. Mr. Sheridan said, he was aware the right honorable gentleman had put his case hypothetically; but he had done it so pointedly, that every person must have known who he meant.

Mr. Sheridan concluded with this observation:—
“If the high bailiff of Westminster were of another complexion, and valued his character beyond the corrupt indemnity which arose from the support of a violent government, I should have considered his situation as most lamentable and wretched; but, speaking of him merely as he is, the speech of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) aggravates his conduct in a tenfold degree; as it shews that the great abilities of that right honorable gentleman were exerted for near an hour and a half in favor of the high bailiff; and that, so far from exculpating him, a fair construction of all that he said, absolutely established the bailiff’s guilt.”

JUNE 16.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

On this day, Mr. Sawbridge moved, “That a Committee be appointed to enquire into the present state of the representation of the commons of Great Britain in parliament.”—Lord Mulgrave moved the previous question.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, so far from his thinking what had fallen early in the debate from the young

member (Mr. M. A. Taylor), who had spoken last but one, rendered a previous question either necessary or proper, the motion of his honorable friend, the worthy alderman (Sawbridge), appeared to him to be exactly adapted to the situation of the honorable member: because the motion was not a motion for this or that particular mode of reform, but a motion for the appointment of a committee to enquire into the state of the representation. From that committee the honorable gentleman might learn facts, upon a knowledge of which alone he could form an opinion, and make up his mind; he hoped, therefore, the noble lord (Mulgrave) would not persist in his motion for the previous question. From the noble lord's well-known candor, he was inclined to hope he would withdraw it; and indeed he had another reason for thinking so, which appeared to him to be a very forcible one, and to be likely to operate more upon his mind, than any other he could suggest; and that was, a consideration for the character of the right honorable gentleman at the head of the Exchequer (Mr. Pitt). That right honorable gentleman had supported the motion so ably and so vigorously in the course of the debate, that he was himself perfectly satisfied and convinced, that the right honorable gentleman, notwithstanding he might not, in his own private opinion, think that the best moment for bringing the subject forward, was sincerely a well-wisher to the motion, and a real friend to a sober and temperate parliamentary reform. What a risk then would the noble lord put his right honorable friend to, if, by moving a previous question at that late hour of the night, he afforded the public room for suspicion, that such a motion was made collusively, and with the right honorable gentleman's connivance? For these reasons, he hoped the noble lord would withdraw his motion.

Lord Mulgrave having observed, "that he disdained the imputation of collusion; and if there was any crime in proposing the previous question, Lord North, who defended that motion, was his accomplice in that foul crime."

Mr. SHERIDAN rose again to complain of Lord Mulgrave's having talked of prophetic misrepresentations and invidious comments. No part of what had fallen from him, he was persuaded, justified such insinuations. He had declared he was perfectly convinced of the sincerity of the right honorable gentleman's zeal for the principle of the worthy Alderman's motion; and had deprecated the consequences that might follow any of the right honorable gentleman's friends' moving the previous question. People without doors, who were not perfectly apprised of all that had passed in the debate, might conceive, that it was a trick and connivance; and that the previous question was moved with the right honorable gentleman's consent and concurrence.—It was in order to avert this misconstruction, that he had exhorted the noble lord to act candidly, and not persist in his motion; and he had been not a little induced to press the withdrawing of the previous question upon the noble lord, from the right honorable Chancellor of the Exchequer's having himself been the first to declare, that disposing of the motion by the previous question, was casting a slur upon the very important topic to which it bore so immediate a reference.

The question being put, the house divided; ayes 199; noes 125.

JUNE 21.

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON SMUGGLING.

On this day Mr. Pitt moved several resolutions, as the foundation of the act, since known by the name of the Commutation Act; and from which the principal benefit expected was the ruin of the smuggling trade.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, the credit of this plan was neither due to the noble lord nor the right honorable gentleman, as he must well know himself; be-

cause he could not be ignorant, that Lord John Cavendish had it in his intention to do the very same thing; nay, had the right honorable gentleman asked for them, he would have given him two bills ready drawn upon the subject. Mr. Sheridan said farther, that it was not ingenuous in the right honorable gentleman to assume a merit which he must know did not belong to him, since he might have found traces of the bills alluded to in office.

JUNE 28.

Mr. SHERIDAN begged leave to inform the right honorable gentleman, Mr. Pitt, that the act for appointing commissioners to take into consideration the state of the public accounts, would expire on Saturday se'nnight; and to ask him if he intended to bring in a bill for continuing a commission from which so much public advantage might be derived.

Mr. Pitt replied it was his intention.

JULY 1.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE OF WAYS
AND MEANS.—COAL TAX.

Sir John Wrottesley observed, he had come down determined to take the sense of the house against the coal tax.

Mr. SHERIDAN earnestly deprecated the honorable baronet's taking the sense of the house on the coal tax that day. He pointed out the extreme unfairness of opposing any tax in that stage. How could the honorable baronet know whether every possible objection might not be cured by some regulation or other, contained in the bill? How did he know that Scotland might not be wholly exempted from the tax? (a loud laugh.) It certainly, Mr. Sheridan said, was possible; and till the bill was before them, no man had a right to con-

tend that Scotland would not be exempted, although he was aware the right honorable gentleman had said, he meant to extend the tax to Scotland. Mr. Sheridan declared, if his worthy friend did divide the house, he would divide with the Chancellor of the Exchequer against him.

Sir John withdrew his intention.

HOLDERS OF NAVY BILLS.

An offer of great extent had been made to the holders of navy bills, under which they were to receive what was described to be an equivalent in discharge of their bills. Mr. Eden stated, that if the offer was accepted by the holders of recent bills in point of date, and rejected by the holder of the oldest bill, the inference would be, that those who had a sacred claim from seriously to be first paid, would be forcibly postponed to others; and enquired whether if any loss should result to them in consequence, or any inconvenience, they would not be entitled so say, that they are suffering by the false faith of the public. Mr. Pitt in reply, said, he could not admit that the offer could be productive of any breach of public faith; it was a substitution, and not a payment, and that creditors who chose to stand out would have it in their power.

Mr. SHERIDAN argued, that this answer was not satisfactory; the word substitution could not change the nature of the thing; if the offer to the bill-holders was considered as a payment at par by the holders of the old bills; it followed, that a preferable payment was made to those who had confessedly no claim to preference; he placed this idea in several points of view. He added, that the navy-bill holders would be more disposed to hold out, because a famous speech of the Earl of Shelburne's, under which the present Chancellor of the Exchequer's situation commenced, had expressly stated, that this mode of payment should be discontinued as ruinous.

The resolutions were afterwards passed.

JULY 1.

BILL FOR THE BETTER GOVERNMENT OF
INDIA.

On this day Mr. Pitt moved for leave to bring in the above bill.

Mr. SHERIDAN requested the Chancellor of the Exchequer would inform him if an idea of what was gone abroad, had any foundation, that the bill for preventing of smuggling, by commutation of duties on tea, was to be abandoned; as the delay of introducing it seemed to countenance the report, and these people who viewed many parts of it in an unfavourable light, particularly the people of York, were inclined to suppose that such was the intention of administration; and he particularly objected to that principle of commutation which burdened the public with so extensive a tax as that on windows; which he would recommend to be laid aside, and to which he would give every opposition.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt replied, that the bill was by no means to be abandoned; but he hoped the honorable gentleman would make some allowances for the weighty and complicated business to which the detail of West India regulations must necessarily subject ministers; the experience of the honorable gentleman, who had already a bill prepared for that purpose, must give him a readiness beyond men who must weigh the matter here.

Some warm and rather ill-humoured expressions dropped between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Sheridan, when the house interfered, and put a stop to the conversation.

JULY 13.

ELECTION WRITS.

Lord Beauchamp moved for leave to bring in a bill, for regulating the power of the Speaker, in regard to the issuing of writs for the election of members in cases of death during the recess of parliament. The Attorney-General was of opinion, that a power might be given in the same bill to the Speaker to issue a writ in case of a vacancy, occasioned during the recess, by a member's accepting of a place.

Mr. SHERIDAN wondered that the honorable gentleman did not feel that it by no means became

that house to facilitate its members in the obtainment of places under the crown. Mr. Sheridan said, there was a manifest difference between a borough remaining unrepresented a short time, during the recess of parliament, and its continuing unrepresented while the parliament was sitting. Mr. Sheridan introduced the conduct of the High Bailiff of Westminster, and the case of the Westminster scrutiny, by way of elucidating his argument.

The motion was put and carried.

JULY 16.

EAST INDIA BILL.

Mr. Pitt moved that the bill be read, paragraph by paragraph.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that so far from the consent of the company actually being with the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt), in his present measure, that he thought himself authorised to ask, if he had not even had the dissent of the company signified to him? And if they had not a meeting postponed to Tuesday from yesterday, to take into consideration several objections which they expressed to have to the present bill.

JULY 19.

EAST INDIA BILL.

The order of the day having been read for the house to resolve itself into a committee, in order to proceed in filling up the blanks, and amending the clauses of the East India bill,

Mr. SHERIDAN rose and observed, that when the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had opened the subject of his present bill, though he had stated it as his intention to combine the three objects of it together, and put them all in one bill; yet he had not signified any determination tenaciously to adhere to that purpose, but had given the house to

understand, that if it should be the wish of any number of gentlemen to have them separated, that he should have no objection. Mr. Sheridan declared, that the part of the bill that went to the institution of a new judicature, was of so much importance, that he could not but wish extremely that it was separated and put into a distinct bill. He reminded Mr. Pitt, that he had himself stated his ideas upon that part of the bill, as by no means settled, and confirmed in his own mind; but had rather thrown them out as hints of what he thought might be done; and had called upon gentlemen, in a very candid way, for their sentiments, in order that, by their assistance, the institution of a new tribunal might be so modified and guarded, as to leave little room for objection. Mr. Sheridan said, emboldened by these sentiments of the right hon. gentleman, he now rose with the hopes of persuading the right hon. gentleman to divide his bill into two at least, by which means that which related to the institution of the new judicature might come fairly under consideration, and receive that distinct degree of discussion, which the very great importance of it, and the serious effect it would have on the criminal jurisdiction of this country, well entitled it to. As no delay would be occasioned by this division of the bill, and as every possible purpose, the right honorable gentleman could propose to himself, from going on with the whole of it as one bill, would be effectually answered, he trusted there could be no objection to such a proposition; and therefore he moved, "That it be an instruction to the committee, that the bill be divided into two bills."

Mr. Pitt, in reply, partly consented to Mr. Sheridan's proposition; but in a subsequent speech retracted, on the ground that since he had first spoken, he had learned from the friends around him, that they were extremely averse from acceding to the measure of dividing the bill into two.

Mr. SHERIDAN wished the right honorable gentleman had adhered to his former concession; though

he acknowledged he was so seldom guilty of conceding to that side of the house, that he had feared his condescension would not continue till the question was put. With regard to what the right honorable gentleman had said relative to the lords, he thought the right honorable gentleman paid the understanding of their lordships a bad compliment; and relied less than he ought upon a house so full of his friends. If he was afraid of their not either comprehending the bill if it went up in parts, or receiving it cordially, let it go up in any shape the right honorable gentleman might choose to give it. As to the subject matters of the bill going to one object, undoubtedly it did so; but they were to all intents and purposes three distinct bills; and as not an hour would have been lost by the separation, he still hoped the right honorable gentleman would re-consider what might be termed his re-consideration; and re-concede what he had just retracted. Had the right honorable gentleman remained firm to his concession, it would be fair to say they would have gained a point; because he was persuaded many who approved of the former parts of the right honorable gentleman's bill, did not approve of that relative to the new judicature; in like manner, he made no scruple to acknowledge, that many who were most partial to the bill that had been brought in by his right honorable friend (who was not then present), before Christmas, had their doubts as to the plan that he had in contemplation, with regard to providing a system of jurisdiction applicable to the trial of the East India delinquents. If the bill had been divided, all those who held, that there had existed no speculation in India; that it was the scene of purity and integrity; that no oppression had been practised; no tyranny exercised over the natives; that rapine was unknown in the different territories we had acquired in the neighbouring princes' domains; and that out of five hundred persons, who had gone to India, only thirty had returned to Eng-

land, and all of them without any fortunes at all, must necessarily have voted against the tribunal bill; because men entertaining and avowing such opinions, would surely never consent to subjecting their friends and principles, their relations and employers, to so severe, and, if their arguments were good, so unjust a tribunal. Mr. Sheridan said, if the right honorable gentleman, however, would not consent to divide his bill, he trusted that he would at least consent not to hurry that part of it that related to the new judicature, through the committee, so as to suffer it to be rendered the business of the tail of a day, or the subject of debate at two or three o'clock in the morning.

JULY 20.

WAYS AND MEANS.—HORSE DEALERS.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and observed, that the proposition, that horse-dealers resident in the borough of Southwark should pay ten pounds for their license, appeared to him extremely liable to evasion. Might not innkeepers very fairly say, they were dealers in horses, and ought not those who kept a great number, either for use, pleasure, or splendour, take out a license as horse-dealers, and under that, shelter themselves from the payment of the duty.

Mr. Pitt replied, that the license was to be taken out by those only whose actual profession it was to buy and sell horses.

JULY 21.

EAST-INDIA BILL.

Mr. Powys said, that he had an insuperable objection, not merely to the wording, but to the very principle of the clause, "obliging all persons, on their return from India, to give in a duplicate of their fortunes upon oath." If he understood it right, it went this length: it admitted the oath of a person to be the ground of his own acquittal, or what came nearly to the same thing, it made the oath a bar to a prosecution; for if a man, however guilty of peculation,

should make oath, that he was not worth more than a particular sum, this oath would be conclusive, and operate as a bar to any prosecution. This would be holding out impunity to the guilty, and consequently such a clause would defeat its own object.

Mr. SHERIDAN supported the objection thrown out by Mr. Powys against the principle of the clause. The sacred obligation of an oath would, he feared, sit exceedingly light on the conscience of a peculator; nay, as it was impossible that a servant of the company could have amassed an inordinate fortune by speculation, without having committed perjury in so doing, by the breach of official oaths; so it was very natural to expect that he would very readily commit a second perjury, in order to cover a former; and there was little reason to hope, that conscience, which had been seared to all sense of religion, duty, and honour, in India, should recover its sensibility merely by a change of climate on a passage from that country to England.

Mr. Dundas observed, " that the overgrown fortunes were generally to be seen among the servants of the company, although they were restricted from trading; and that as to the real trader, however rich he returned to his country, he would respect, cherish, and revere him.

Mr. Sheridan said, he made no doubt but the rich merchant would be respected, cherished, and revered; what treatment he should meet with, if poor, it was not for him to foresee or to foretel.

On the clause being read to exempt generally from the necessity of giving an inventory, and swearing to the truth of its contents, all persons who should arrive from India before the 1st of January, 1787,

Mr. Sheridan said, this clause was in fact an indemnity held out to all speculators, and a warning to them to return to England before the first day of the year 1787, as the means by which they might screen themselves from trial, and their property from being taken from them, as a punishment for the illegal methods by which it might have been acquired. The inventory and oath were deemed the means by which evidence of their speculations

was to be procured ; these means, therefore, being taken away, impunity of course would ensue.

The clause was afterwards agreed to without a division.

The Chairman next read the clause which precludes from returning to India all persons who had served in that country ; and after their return to England, should have resided here or elsewhere in Europe, for a certain space of time, unless arising from ill health.

Mr. Sheridan said this would greatly injure the public service, as the officers of the king's army and navy having once served in India, could not return to it if this clause should pass.

The amendment was afterwards passed, removing Mr. Sheridan's objection, by exempting king's officers.

**FIRST CLAUSE ON THE SUBJECT OF THE NEW
JUDICATURE TO BE INSTITUTED UNDER THE
AUTHORITY OF THE BILL.**

Mr. Sheridan said, what the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had suggested, certainly went a considerable way towards removing the objections that he had entertained against the court of judicature, which the printed bill held forth, as the tribunal which was to be instituted ; it was, however, impossible for him, on the first hearing of alterations so various and so material, to say how far they were all of them improvements or not ; but as the report of the bill, when it came out of the committee, was to be printed, with the amendments, he should then be the better able to judge, and to give his opinion upon the subject of the new tribunal as it would then stand.

The clause was agreed to without a division.

JULY 21.

ARREAR OF THE CIVIL LIST.

Mr. Pitt stated, there had been an excess in every one of the three quarters the late administration had been in office.

Mr. SHERIDAN went into a copious discussion of the account. He said, the imputation which Mr.

Pitt had thrown on the late administration, he would undertake most unequivocally to refute. The first quarter, in which his right honorable friend was in office, the civil list incurred no arrear. He assigned reasons why there had been an excess in the other quarters; and, after a variety of arithmetical statements and references, he contended, that he had clearly shewn that his right honorable friend had not been to blame; for that it was impossible for him to know of demands that were to come upon the civil list, after the quarter's accounts were respectively made up, because many of those demands came from abroad, and some of them from so distant a quarter as the East Indies. Having amply dilated on those points, he took notice of the nature of the present application, and read the following extract from His Majesty's speech to his parliament, during Lord Shelburne's administration:—

“ I have carried into strict execution the several reductions in my civil list expenses, directed by an act of the last session. I have introduced a farther reform into other departments, and suppressed several sinecure places in them. I have by this means so regulated my establishment, that my expenses shall not in future exceed my income.”

He observed upon this, that it was a promise made to parliament, while an administration were in office, of which the right honorable gentleman made a part; and that, therefore, the house had some sort of right to expect, that while he was in office, at least, the promise would be kept. The fact, however, he said, was, that it was impossible to confine the civil list within the sum allowed for it. The right honorable gentleman had, therefore, acted prudently and candidly, in declaring, that he would not pledge himself that no future debt should arise. After the sum now asked was voted, the right hon. gentleman must come down again next session and do one of these two things: he must either call upon parliament to grant a larger annuity, or propose a

reduction of the establishments. Whether the establishments could be reduced was a question, about which there might be some doubts; but he should have thought it would have been more adviseable for the right honorable gentleman to have stated the whole case to the house; and to have asked, at once, for a sum sufficient to answer every probable demand, not only of the present debt, but every debt that might in future be incurred, if a larger sum was not voted for the civil list, or if the establishments were not reduced. Mr. Sheridan gave Mr. Pitt credit for a due attention to economy; and said, it was very true some of the incidents that made up the article of occasional payments in the quarter ending April 5, 1784, would not again happen; and, as to the expense attending a change of administration, that he was persuaded the right honorable gentleman was sincere in wishing it might not very soon be incurred. He contended farther, that the present application was a virtual repeal of Mr. Burke's bill; and, therefore, to prevent a repetition of a similar circumstance, he recommended the right honorable gentleman to ask, at once, for a sum equal to the occasions of the civil list, so that there might not be any farther necessity of applying to parliament for relief.

After this speech a long contest ensued on the point, whether any excess was incurred or not in the administration of the Duke of Portland. At length the sum of £60,000, moved for the discharge of arrears, was granted without a division.

WAYS AND MEANS.—TAX ON QUALIFICATIONS, REGISTERS, AND LICENCES.

Mr. Sheridan said, the taxes the right honorable gentleman had that day proposed, appeared to him to be, in general, unexceptionable; but if he were to object to any, it would be to those relative to game, because he could only consider them as proposed with a view to give vigour to the game laws, which were a system of oppression and tyranny; if they

were not proposed with that view they would not produce a shilling.

Mr. Pitt said, he was as little a friend to the arbitrary spirit of the game laws as Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan said, then let the right honorable gentleman move for a repeal of those laws; that done, his taxes on qualifications will be wise, salutary, and efficient. What, Mr. Sheridan asked, did the committee imagine was the reason of gentlemen's being so desirous of this tax, and so willing to pay five pounds instead of two towards it, but with a view to strengthen and secure themselves in the possession of that monopoly, which the abominable and despotic system of the game laws was calculated to create? As soon as the business was over, he said, he would move for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the game laws; and, he trusted, he should have the support of the right honorable gentleman in carrying it through the house.

Mr. Sheridan rose again, and said, he would not immediately move for leave to bring in a bill, as he had mentioned, but he would certainly bring the matter into consideration in a few days; because he was not only convinced that our game-laws were a disgrace to us as a free people, but that the game laws made the poachers.

POSTAGE OF LETTERS.

Mr. Sheridan mentioned the gross evasion of the post-office acts of parliament, by a great number of letters sent to town by diligences, stage-coaches, and other carriages. All the great trading towns in particular, he said, carried on this practice, each vehicle having a regular letter-box. These carriages, he said, would still continue a favorite species of conveyance, on account of their great expedition.

Mr. Pitt mentioned the imposition practised on the post-office by the concealing letters in newspapers, or by writing short scraps on their edges.

Mr. Sheridan advised the right honorable gentleman by no means to throw any impediment in the way of the circulation of newspapers. Let him think a moment what an essential instrument of revenue a newspaper was. It was not merely the stamp, but every advertisement it contained was a source of benefit to the revenue, nay, many paragraphs paid duty. Perhaps there was not an instance of any one object that paid so much of its entire receipt into the public coffers!

Mr. Sheridan raised a smile in the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he talked of paragraphs paying duty, and Mr. Pitt asked across the table, if Mac Ossian's manufacture paid duty.

JULY 26.

AMENDMENTS UPON INDIA BILLS.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that if gentlemen on either side of the house went from the question, and were only mindful of charging persons in India with peculation, and defending their own conduct; or proving that, although they had been delinquents, there were still greater than themselves, there would be no end to the business; and the house would refer the hearing to a new judicature, as well as their trial;—therefore he hoped to hear no more deviations; but that gentlemen would stick to the question, and point out their objections to the bill, and not to the persons that had been the occasion of its being made. He then noticed, that the bill had been so altered, so mangled, and so transformed, that it did not appear like the same bill. Indeed, it ought not to be called an alteration, but a total transformation, different both in object and principle to the former bill; and the silence of the two right honorable gentlemen (Pitt and Dundas) was to him proof that they saw the necessity of a re-commitment. But if that was not, the very appearance in the first page of the new printed bill

was;—for there, by the references, it was plain that twenty-one new clauses were added; which were to be known by the letters A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T V W; therefore it was to be hoped some gentleman would add three more clauses for X Y Z, to make the alphabet complete; which would then serve as a horn-book for the present ministry. The old clauses, now left out, were referred to, and known by being in black letter at the bottom of the column;—where, to be sure, they stood in mourning for the folly of their parents; and pointed out the slovenly manner in which the bill was originally drawn; notwithstanding the right honorable gentleman (Sir G. Howard) in the red riband, had praised it for its accuracy;—accurate it could not be, when twenty-one new clauses were added, and the rest totally altered in the committee. As a proof that it was necessary to re-commit the bill for the honor of the house, he would convince them by reading a part of one of the clauses; wherein a dead person was to give an account how he came by certain papers. He then read, “That papers, containing the account of their effects, were to be sent to His Majesty, in his Court of King’s Bench, and under the seals of two or more judges of the said supreme court; and one or more of the judges of the said supreme court shall deliver the same to the agent or agents of the party or parties requiring the same; which said agent or agents (or, in case of his or their death, the person into whose hands the same shall come) shall deliver the same to one of the clerks in court, of His Majesty’s Court of King’s Bench, in the public office; and make oath, that he received the same from the hands of one or more of the judges of such court in India; or, if such agent be dead, in what manner the same came into his hands.”

The honorable gentleman read a variety of other clauses; and pointed out wherein they were worded so as, in his mind, to be perfect nonsense; and de-

clared, that he never would consent to suffer the first principles of the constitution to be violated, to answer any expediency whatever. But probably the reason of instituting a new court of judicature was to give employment to the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) and some others; whose places, by their own accounts, were sinecures;—therefore it was on the principle that mothers gave playthings to their children, merely to keep them out of mischief. If so, he had no objection; and made not the least doubt but strict justice would be done, as their integrity had been tried on other occasions. He particularly pointed out the absurdity of a clause relative to the secret council; and remarked, that the whole bill evidently appeared as if the two contending parties, the crown and company, had endeavoured to over-reach each other. The company remonstrated against the first bill, because orders were to be transmitted to India without their consent; and insisted on the right of some of their directors being acquainted with all matters before they were dispatched. To please them, the right honorable gentleman had suffered them to have a secret committee of three directors; but the company were not a bit nearer;—for those three directors were sworn not to divulge any thing done in council;—of course they must cut a ridiculous figure; for they might be present at a court of directors, and see and hear measures carrying on, and regulations making, diametrically opposite to what they knew had been determined on in council; and by their oaths were debarred from giving any other information than a nod or a wink across the table, or a grave shake of the head, to intimate they knew something which they dare not divulge. He then pointed out the clause which obliges the company to transmit all papers to the Secretary of State and Council for their approbation, previous to their being sent to India; and remarked on the difficulty that would accrue from the alterations

made by each party. But what was curious was the wording of the next clause to it ; which began, " For the better dispatch of business, &c. be it enacted, that in case of any alteration being made, the company might be at liberty to send it back again to be reconsidered ; and in case of their not meeting with redress, then they might be at liberty to refer to the King in council ;" who, in fact, was the same tribunal they had appealed to twice before. Surely that was a curious method of dispatch, to keep sending backwards and forwards a paper alternately ; and which might never be approved.

He dwelt much on the rapacity, and other improper conduct of Mr. Hastings, being all forgiven in the present bill. But that, he said, was a matter which Mr. Hastings's India parliamentary interest, no doubt, insisted upon ; and which a minister, depending on such men, did not dare to refuse. He adverted to the new court of judicature ; which took away from British subjects the trial by jury ; and in so doing overturned the principle of the constitution. Here he was remarkably severe on the minister ; who, under colour of saving the charters of a company of men that all the world allowed to have acted dishonestly, subverted the very foundation stone on which the great Magna Charta of their country was built ; and did a deed which paved the direct road to the establishment of arbitrary power in all the dominions of Great Britain. This, he said, was modern popularity. He attacked the minister for daring to say that this bill was acceptable in India. This he argued on two points : if it was agreeable to the delinquents, it certainly must be a bad bill ; and on that point the minister could gain no credit. The fact, however, was not so ; and he was happy to inform the house, that the minister mis-stated the matter, when he said, the bill was acceptable in the East. In arguments of this kind there was nothing so strong as evidence ; and therefore against Mr. Pitt's *ipse dixit*,

that this bill was universally liked all over India, where it seems its original principles and clauses were fabricated; he only referred the house to a truth not to be contradicted, which lay upon the table—a petition from six hundred and forty-eight of the principal persons residing in Bengal; beseeching the house, by all that they held most dear, not to violate the constitution, by so dreadful an act of parliament, as one for taking away from British subjects the right of being tried by their peers. This pure spirit of rectifying the ancient chartered rights of the people, would, no doubt, extend itself in time to every part of the English dominions; and trial by jury be taken away from all His Majesty's subjects in every part of the globe. Here the honorable gentleman called for the attention of the house. He said, the India phalanx, those Swiss guards of Eastern speculation, had openly declared, that they would overthrow the last administration; and by doing so, teach another how to value and respect their friendship;—nay, these Eastern Lords went so far as to declare, that the depravity of this country was now arrived to such a pitch, that they could carry any point by money. After a variety of other arguments, he concluded with a reliance on the candor of the minister, that he would re-commit the bill, that it might be divested of its slovenly dress, and made conformable to common sense—even if the principles were to be divested of common justice.

The amendment being carried without a division,

Mr. Sheridan then said, that as the house had determined not to send the bill back to the committee, he could not now proceed to those alterations which he would have thought it his duty to have offered, if it had been re-committed: he declared his object was not to gain time; but in reality to move such amendments as to him appeared absolutely necessary. The right honorable gentleman had said,

that the East-India Company had assigned good reasons for the alterations that they had required: he made no doubt but they must have assigned very convincing reasons indeed to make the right honorable gentleman give up almost the entire principle of his bill, and bring it out of the committee as different from what it was when it was committed, as an effectual differed from an ineffectual control; indeed the right honorable member was in the right for saying, that he had had good reasons for the alterations. He had only to look about him, and he might see himself surrounded with reasons strong enough in all conscience to make him stand well with persons who had overturned the administration, and were powerful enough to make their successors feel they were mere creatures of their own hands, which, as they set them up, might pull them down again. It was, therefore, very prudent and politic in the right honorable member to call the bill brought in by his right honorable friend a bill for establishing a system of plunder and despotism; such hard words would please the committee beyond description; and secure to the right honorable member their support, and consequently his present situation.

AUGUST 2.

**REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE
DIVIDEND BILL.**

An Amendment was moved that the East India Company should pay five per cent. on their debt.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he trusted the minister would not be followed so implicitly upon the question that night, as he had been two days before. Gentlemen saw more clearly its quality, and he believed, they would not chuse to countenance a proceeding so unbecoming. That in private life, a man

might upon occasion find it convenient or necessary to conceal his embarrassments, by the gaiety, or even the splendor of his appearance; that he might dart into some expenses for the sake of maintaining a declining credit, he admitted. A private man, if he had future prospects of retrieving himself, might, perhaps, without much imputation, do this. But was the same conduct to be permitted to a state; or was a nation like ours, which stood on the purity and clearness of her credit, to give her countenance and sanction to such a manœuvre? What might not be the conclusions drawn from such conduct? Take the question in another view. At a time when we were, through the most urgent state of necessity, laying heavy burdens on the poor people of this country—when even the poor seemed to be selected for the burdens—was it decent to rob them of £75,000 a year, in order to free a company which boasted of its opulence, and which, whatever might be its real ability, had found the means of planting a phalanx in that house, for the purpose of shifting their distresses from themselves on the heads of the people of England. Save this £75,000 a year to the nation, and you may relieve the unhappy poor from your new duty on candles; save this sum, and several of your new taxes distressing the valuable manufacturer, and the industrious artisan—taxes which crush ingenuity, and take from œconomy its fruits, will be unnecessary.

On a division there appeared, ayes (for the amendment) 27; noes 83.

AUGUST 6.

PETITION FROM NAVY BILL HOLDERS.

In the course of the debate it was observed by Lord Mahon "that if it was a breach of public credit to permit navy bills to run above two years, then the last administration had been guilty of that breach of public credit, by having neglected last year to pay off the bills of 1781; and Lord John Cavendish and Mr. Fox now stand before

the country as public culprits, for having thus disregarded the national faith." Mr. Rose also observed, "*that the late administration had been in time enough to have proposed the funding of the navy debt. They came in on the 2d of April, and they knew for two months before, that they would come in; the administration being out of office in effect, and doing no business all that time. They might therefore, have done all that was necessary as well as the present administration. Mr. Rose took occasion to say, that as it had been observed, that Mr. Pitt's taxes of this year would prove unproductive, he was persuaded, if they turned out as unproductive as the noble Lord's at the head of the Exchequer last year, the country would be in a miserable condition indeed.*"

Mr. SHERIDAN defended the last administration; and stated, that if there was any blame due, it was to their predecessors, for not having left the trace of a tax, or the outlines of a budget behind them, when they quitted place. As to their not having done any business for two months, before their successors kissed hands, the fact was otherwise. They had done their own business all that time, granting pensions, and reversions, and titles to each other. Mr. Sheridan took notice of what Lord Mahon had said of Lord John Cavendish's standing a culprit before the house, and denied that the assertion was founded. Mr. Sheridan also said, Mr. Rose's remark about the unproductiveness of the taxes last year, was uncandid in the extreme; since what had happened to the receipt tax, might have happened to any. Now the bill to enforce it had passed, he had no doubt of its becoming extremely productive.

AUGUST 12.

**DUTY ON LICENSES TO PEOPLE FOR REGISTER-
ING THEIR QUALIFICATIONS TO KILL GAME.**

The order of the day for going into a committee on this bill being called for,

Mr. SHERIDAN stated to the house, that there was a breach of order in the body of this bill, which was drawn on a wider scale than the house had au-

thorised it to be done. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer first proposed the raising of money by this mode, he had taken the liberty to ask, whether it was intended to give more effect to the game laws? He was answered in the negative; and every gentleman then present expressed a satisfaction that it was not. The title of the bill expressed no more than a tax on people already qualified by former laws to kill game; but this bill, in its present state, extended the license to all descriptions of people, as well unqualified as qualified, which was assuming an extent the committee did not intend. He then called upon the clerk to read the several resolutions which had been passed in the committee of ways and means relative to this subject; from which it appeared, that the bill at present had gone farther than the committee authorised it to go; for which reason, he said, it ought not to be permitted to proceed a step farther; but, according to the rules of the house, it ought to be withdrawn, and brought forward again in a shape more exactly conformable to the orders of the committee.

The Speaker allowed, that there was, in this instance, a step taken, contrary to the orders of the house; but that, however, might be remedied, if the house were unanimous in permitting the bill to go into a committee, and then the objectionable part might be removed: but if any member dissented to the commitment of the bill, the order of the house must be enforced, and the bill withdrawn. But, however, if it was insisted that this bill should be withdrawn, the same might be presented again, and read a first and second time immediately on the same day, which would bring it to the same stage in which it was before it was withdrawn.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt observed, that as the objections of the honorable gentleman were not against the principle of the bill, he thought that the removal of two words would bring it to the precise idea which the honorable member had proposed; and if he would agree to permit him to commit the bill, and it should appear that the matter could not be rectified without a breach of order, he would consent to withdraw it.

Mr. Sheridan replied, that there must be more than two words altered; and desired the right honorable gentleman would inspect the bill more minutely.

Mr. Ord said, he did not conceive that the orders of the house were infringed by the bill, which had not yet its blanks filled up; and as there were no penalties in the bill before the blanks were filled up, which could not be done before it was committed, he argued that nothing beyond the title had yet been assumed in the body of the bill.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt argued, that still the bill did not exceed the limits allowed to it by its title; for it was not compulsory on any man to register his qualification, but the person qualified by former laws: it was optional in any other person not so qualified to take out a license, for the present bill demanded nothing from a man who is not qualified. Had there been a compulsory clause on every man besides those qualified as above, the observation of the honorable gentleman would have its force; but in the present case, there being no such compulsion, the bill was within its just limits. He then urged the commitment of the bill, for the purpose of making the amendments which were requisite.

Mr. Sheridan did not apprehend that the bill could well be altered by the committee, in such a manner as to bring it back regularly to the precise limits marked out by the resolution of the committee of ways and means, on which the bill was, or at least ought to have been founded; and beyond the limits of which it could not be extended, without a violation of the form of proceeding, hitherto religiously observed by the house.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt begged then to know what was the honorable gentleman's objection to the bill in its present form; for, he said, he really had not attended to it.

Mr. Sheridan replied, that he was really astonished at such a question; he never could have conceived that a gentleman who had taken so much pains to combat his objection, and to shew, that by leaving out a few words in one or two of the clauses, it might be very easily removed, could afterwards ask what that very objection was. His objection was this, as he had already stated, that the resolution of the committee on ways and means on this head, went no farther than to impose a tax on persons, already qualified by law to kill game, on the registering of their qualifications; but the bill went a great deal farther, and extended the tax to all persons indiscriminately, who should take out licenses

to shoot. This was certainly a stretch made by the framer of the bill, not warranted by the resolution ; which had in its contemplation a less extended description of men, than were made objects of the bill.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt, finding that the order of the house was against the bill, said, that if it was withdrawn, much time would be lost before it could be presented again ; for though only two alterations were to be made in it, it must be copied over again ; and that could not be done this day, as the bill consisted of twenty-seven sheets.

Mr. Sheridan, however, did not insist that the order should be enforced ; he convinced the right honorable member, that though he had it in his power to throw out this bill for that time, in spite of his majority, still he would not oppose the commitment of the bill, which the right honorable gentleman had so much at heart ; he said, that if no one else should insist upon the order being enforced, he would withdraw his opposition.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt returned him thanks for his condescension. The bill was then sent to the committee, where it was so altered, as to be made conformable to the resolution of ways and means, to which it had a reference. When the house was resumed, the order of the day for going into a committee on the hat duty bill was read.

Mr. Sheridan then observed, that the tax to be paid on licenses, by persons exercising the trade of hat-making, would, he apprehended, greatly reduce the duty on the manufacture ; as it would discourage many persons in the country towns and villages from making hats. There were a great many poor hatters in the country, who lived principally by journey work, but occasionally made hats on their own account for their neighbours ; and this circumstance would subject him to the necessity of taking out a license, at a price which, in his opinion, was much too high. In many villages in Staffordshire, he knew that hat-makers rented small houses, at the very low rents of from thirty to thirty-five and forty shillings a year ; now, a tax of ten shillings for a license, being equal to the fourth of their rent, was

certainly too high. With respect to the hat-makers of London, he would say nothing; they were, perhaps, able to bear it without any inconvenience; but with respect to those in the country towns and villages, he should propose that the tax for the license should be reduced one half; so that in country towns it should be ten shillings, and in villages five shillings.

Mr. Steele said the honorable member's proposal was not unreasonable; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not mean to oppose it.

The bill then went into a committee, where Mr. Sheridan's alteration of the tax was admitted. The house was then resumed, and adjourned.

AUGUST 13.

GAME QUALIFICATIONS.

The report of the committee having been brought up, and read a first time,

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and re-stated some of his former objections; admitting, however, that the bill had been so altered and modified in the committee, that it no longer exceeded the limits prescribed for it by the resolution, under the authority of which it had been introduced into the house. Mr. Sheridan admitted also, that the bill would not add to the severe and oppressive tendency of the game laws; on the contrary, he said, it would be a nugatory act, and extremely unproductive. He contended, that none but poachers would derive any benefit from it; and stated, in a ludicrous way, the circumstances that might be produced in consequence of such a bill's passing into a law; declaring, that a great variety of persons otherwise qualified, than merely in right of property, would not take out any license.— Upon the whole consideration of the present bill, and of the extraordinary abilities of the right honorable gentleman, under whose direction it was drawn, it was plain, he said, that it was utterly impossible to frame a rational system of game laws; indeed,

there never yet had passed a bill relative to game, and he was convinced there never would pass one, that was not irreconcilable either to common sense or common justice.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt took credit to himself, for having been able, in the committee, to have met two of the honorable gentleman's principal objections, and to have surmounted them both, viz. the objection stated on Thursday by Mr. Sheridan, that the bill exceeded the powers granted by the resolution, ordering it to be brought in, and the objection against it, as tending to add to the harsh effect of the game laws.

Mr. Sheridan rose once more; and Alderman Newnham also spoke upon the subject; after which the amendments were read through a second time; and having been agreed to, the bill was ordered to be engrossed.

Mr. Sheridan said, he meant to make a motion on a subject which, advanced as the session was, there must, nevertheless, be some conversation about, before parliament rose. He meant the account produced to the house when the civil list was under consideration, which stated, that the arrear upon the last year amounted to 44,000*l*. This account Mr. Sheridan declared to be fallacious, and ill founded. He said, the expenses of the civil list did not come within his department when in office; and therefore, when the matter was last agitated, he was perfectly ignorant of the real state of the case; he had since enquired particularly into the matter, and he found the fact to be as he had stated it. The nature of the fallacy, he said, was this:—the account was made out so as to exhibit, on one side, the actual expenditure upon each quarter; and to set against it only the amount of the quarter's division of the 900,000*l*. allotted for the civil list; whereas, it ought also to state on the side of the receipt, all the sums that came in aid of the civil list, which would, of course, go to the diminution of the excess of expenditure. There was, Mr. Sheridan said, the sum of 10,900*l*. which fell into the first quarter of the year, when his right honorable friend was in office, and that ought to

have been set against the excess of 13,000*l.* upon the expenditure of that quarter. Mr. Sheridan moved, "That an abstract of the account of the civil list be printed."

This produced an altercation upon the subject between Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Rose, Mr. Steele, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Sheridan persisting in his position; and the three last gentlemen denying that there was any fallacy in the case, Mr. Pitt said, he should be glad to have a little conversation with Mr. Fox upon the subject. To which Mr. Sheridan replied, that he certainly might have that pleasure, as his right honorable friend would be present when the matter came under discussion.

The motion was agreed to.

AUGUST 19.

CIVIL LIST.

As soon as the business of the day was gone through,

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and began with observing, that he feared he had given unnecessary trouble in moving for so many papers; because, as those papers had not been upon the table more than an hour, it had been impossible for gentlemen in general to have derived much information from them. At the same time that he made this remark, he said he was ready to declare, that he had himself obtained a degree of information from them sufficient for his argument; and before he went into it, he begged leave to say, that he had not moved for the papers to be laid before the house, or put gentlemen to the inconvenience of attending that day, solely with a view to support the assertion made some time since by his right honorable friend, and attempted to be refuted by a right honorable gentleman opposite to him; but chiefly in order to bring the state of the civil list, and the nature of the estimate upon the table, into consideration, that the house might be apprised of the manner in which the account had been laid before parliament, and of what the debt of the civil list really was, as well as of the periods in which the arrear had accrued. Having said this, Mr. Sheri-

dan produced Mr. Burke's bill, and read the title and preamble, in order to shew, that one of its principal objects was to prevent the civil list from running in debt, and to put a stop to the practice of ministers coming down to the house of commons year after year, to state that His Majesty's civil list was in debt, and to desire a vote of money to pay the debt. He also read the King's late message, stating, that he was concerned to find himself in debt; and he compared it with that part of the royal speech from the throne, at the beginning of the session of parliament 1782 and 1783, in which His Majesty assures parliament, that he had made such regulations, with regard to his civil list, as should for the future prevent his expenses exceeding his income. Upon these documents, he reasoned to shew, that the act of parliament, commonly called Mr. Burke's bill, and the royal word from the throne, had been violated, by the minister's having lately come to the house with the message, to which he had alluded, and obtained a vote for 60,000*l*. He stated, that the proceeding had been extremely reprehensible and improper; because, if Mr. Burke's bill had proved to be inefficient and inadequate, with respect to one of its principal objects, viz. the preventing the civil list from going into arrears, the regular and the right way would have been, to have moved for leave to bring in a bill to amend the act, and to have given such an addition to the civil list as experience should have proved was absolutely necessary.

Mr. Sheridan next called the house back to the recollection of what had passed on the day when the right honorable gentleman opposite to him had stated, that upon the four last quarters of the civil list, there had been an arrear of 44,000*l*. This he had, at the time, controverted; and he had since made a good deal of inquiry into the true state of the affair, and he flattered himself he should be able to prove, that the debt, when the right honorable gentleman had asked for the sixty thousand pounds, was not forty

four thousand; and that the estimate upon the table was manifestly incorrect, no less than eighty places having been left out of it, the money to pay the salaries of which amounted to eleven thousand pounds, exclusive of that glaring error, which Mr. Gilbert, the author of that estimate, had fallen into. He declared the estimate itself was fallacious—he did not mean that its title did not speak its import—it certainly did; but the whole of the estimate itself was delusive, because it only compared the actual charges incurred and paid out of the civil list, against an estimate of the four quarters' receipts of the 900,000*l.* voted by parliament; whereas every body knew that there were various sums that came from time to time in aid of the civil list, such as savings, the suppressed places, fees, and sums imprest from the Exchequer, all of which ought to be taken into the account of the receipts, in order to distinguish between a bare exceeding upon a comparison of the expenditure against the 900,000*l.* and an arrear actually incurred by the expenditure exceeding the gross receipt. By the mistake he had already mentioned, viz. the total omission of the mention of eighty places, the salaries of which amounted to eleven thousand pounds, the house would see, that even upon the statement of Mr. Gilbert, if the estimate had been correct, the expenses of the civil list would stand at 911,000*l.* instead of 900,000*l.* There consequently were 11,000*l.* out of 44,000*l.* which the right honorable gentleman had stated as the debt upon the four last quarters, and he would presently prove that a great deal more was to be taken off. In order to do this, Mr. Sheridan entered into a long train of arguments founded upon figures, through which it was impossible to follow him in detail from memory. We shall only, therefore, state the leading parts of what we understood him to reason upon. Added to the eleven thousand pounds arising from the eighty places omitted in the estimate, there was, he said, a surplus of the money

voted in aid of the civil list last year, amounting to 10,900*l*. There was also a sum in the exchequer of two or three thousand pounds, and a sum of two thousand in the hands of the Lord Chamberlain. Upon the whole, Mr. Sheridan contended, that there had been no arrear incurred during the two first quarters; and that, including the four, the arrear had only amounted to about sixteen thousand pounds, which certainly was no great debt for the civil list to have incurred. He said, the Christmas quarter, ending January 5, 1784, neither he nor his right honorable friend was answerable for, as they had gone out of office on the 26th of December. He added a vast variety of ingenious reasoning to illustrate his positions; and before he made his motion, said, he flattered himself he had made good his word; and unless it was intended on the other side of the house to resort to a quibble between the word arrear and the word exceeding (which he should consider as the most pitiful of all quibbles) he conceived what he had said could not be denied, much less refuted; and for that reason he trusted, there would be no objection made to two motions that he should offer upon the subject. Mr. Sheridan read his motions, before he made them; the first was, a resolution, that a true estimate of the expenditure of the civil list should be prepared against the next session to be laid before the house; and that it should be drawn correctly, and agreeably to the direction of Mr. Burke's bill. The other was, that a complete and accurate account of the entire receipt and expenditure of the civil list for the past year, should be annually laid before that house, which Mr. Burke's bill also expressly ordered.

Mr. Fox rose and seconded the motion. Mr. Rose objected to both resolutions, and moved the question of adjournment upon them, which was carried.

FEBRUARY 9, 1785.

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY.

The order of the day being for the house to resume the consideration of this business, the Right Hon. Wilbore Ellis moved, "that it appearing to this house that Thomas Corbett, Esq. high bailiff for the city of Westminster, having received a precept from the sheriffs of Middlesex for electing two citizens to serve in parliament for the said city; and having taken and finally closed the poll on the 17th of May last, being the day next before the day of the return of the said writ, be now directed forthwith to make a return of his precept of members chosen in pursuance of it." This was opposed by Lord Mulgrave, Mr. Bearcroft, and the Master of the Rolls (Sir Lloyd Kenyon.)

Mr. SHERIDAN replied to different arguments adverse to the motion, that had fallen from Mr. Bearcroft, Lord Mulgrave, the Master of the Rolls, and other speakers. He began with observing, that they had that day been honored with the councils of a complete gradation of lawyers; they had received the opinion of a judge, of an attorney-general in petto, of an ex-attorney-general, and of a practising barrister. The encomiums passed on his right honorable friend by one learned gentleman (Mr. Bearcroft) were so applicable, that when the learned gentleman added, that, besides his other great and shining talents, his right honorable friend stood distinguished for his boldness and candour, for his quickness of discernment and good sense, every body who knew his right honorable friend thought the learned gentleman had really been successful in his description, and drawn a just portrait; but when the learned gentleman afterwards stated, at the time that his right honorable friend professed most candour he was then most dangerous, and that he was to be the least trusted when he wished to throw himself into the arms of the house, the learned gentleman completely did away the resemblance, and proved that he was wholly unacquainted with the true character of his right honorable friend, who was not more remarkable for his splendid abilities than

for the genuine liberality and unaffected candor of his mind, and the manly, direct, and open conduct that he had ever pursued. Had the learned gentleman's statement been correct, his panegyric would have proved a satire, and it must have been understood, that when he talked of his right honorable friend's boldness, he meant his craft; and when he mentioned his candor, he designed to charge him with hypocrisy. It was not from such men as his right honorable friend that danger was to be dreaded. If the wolf was to be feared, the learned gentleman might rest assured it would be the wolf in sheep's clothing, the masked pretender to patriotism. It was not from the fang of the lion, but from the tooth of the serpent—that reptile which insidiously steals upon the vitals of the constitution, and gnaws it to the heart, ere the mischief is suspected, that destruction was to be feared. With regard to the acquisition of a learned gentleman, who had declared he meant to vote with them that day, he was sorry to acknowledge, that from the declaration the learned gentleman had made in the beginning of his speech, he saw no great reason to boast of their auxiliary. The learned gentleman, who had with peculiar modesty stiled himself a chicken lawyer, had declared that, thinking them in the right with respect to the subject of that day's discussion, he should vote with them; but he had at the same time thought it necessary to assert, that he had never before voted differently from the minister and his friends, and perhaps he never should again vote with those to whom he meant to give his support that day. It was, Mr. Sheridan remarked, a little singular to vote with them professedly, because the learned gentleman found them to be in the right; and in the very moment that he had assigned so good a reason for changing his side, to declare, that in all probability he never should vote with them again. He was sorry, he said, to find the chicken was a bird of ill omen, and that its augury was so unpro-

pitious to their future interests. Perhaps it would have been as well, under these circumstances, that the chicken had not left the barn-door of the treasury, but continued, side by side, with the old cock, to pick those crumbs of comfort, which would, doubtless, be dealt out in due time with a liberality proportioned to the fidelity of the feathered tribe. Mr. Sheridan very happily introduced an elegant latin quotation, which he addressed to Mr. Taylor, in this part of his speech.

Last year, Mr. Sheridan observed, the whole of the question relative to the scrutiny depended upon the high bailiff's conscience, which, it was contended, he ought to have time to satisfy ; whereas this year it was evident he had no conscience, at least none in his own keeping, for he had delivered it over to his assessor, as to a jury. This was the first time, Mr. Sheridan said, that he had ever heard of a man's conscience being to be satisfied through the sensations of another. He had always heretofore thought that the conscience saw with its own eyes, and was affected by its own organs ; that conscience was the only thing one could not hear by proxy ; no letter of attorney would be of use to it ; it was that which decided for itself, and would by no means admit of another's judgment to decide for it. As the high bailiff's conscience, therefore, had now been proved to be made of transferable stuff, he hoped it would no longer stand in the way of the house's justice, but that they would exercise that discretion wisely, which they had, in his opinion, exercised most unwisely last year ; and would put an end to that miserable, absurd, and oppressive institution, the Westminster scrutiny. A noble lord, he took notice, had early in the debate said, that it was a false idea that our constitution was injured by the absence of two or more members from that house ; but that the fact was, the constitution required that no members should be illegally restrained from attending their duty there. This

doctrine, Mr. Sheridan said, he was persuaded, was ill founded ; and he believed he could convince the noble lord that it was so. In case of death, which, though an insurmountable restraint, was certainly not an illegal one, what sort of language did the Speaker's warrant hold ? Let the noble lord attend to the expression, and then ask himself if he was not mistaken. Mr. Sheridan here read those words, wherein the warrant assigns, as a reason for its being issued, the extreme necessity that the house of popular representation should be full and complete, when the business of the king and his people, the church and state, are to be agitated.

There had fallen an expression from the noble lord which appeared to him, Mr. Sheridan said, to be very extraordinary ; and that was, in mentioning Mr. Grenville's bill, (to which, by the bye, the noble lord had paid no great compliment) he had talked of its having surmounted the opposition of the noble lord in the blue riband, notwithstanding all his influence as a minister. This reminded him of a most insulting sarcasm, aimed at the noble lord in the blue riband a few days since, by the right honorable gentleman opposite to him, which had not a little surprised him ; he meant, when talking of the terms " as a man and a minister," the right honorable gentleman had alluded to the influence of a minister, in lofty language ; declaring that he never used any but the honest influence of his abilities, and the services he might do his country ; though he chose, at the same time, in terms of sarcastic insult, to suggest that the noble lord in the blue riband had used the influence of bribery and corruption only, when he was minister. At the time this was said, Mr. Sheridan declared, he looked over to the treasury bench to see how some of those felt who sat nearest the right honorable gentleman, who had formerly been in the councils of the noble lord in the blue riband, had shared his confidence, and who consequently must have borne a part in the sarcasm,

had it applied to the noble lord. Perhaps the other noble lord had this day introduced the words "as a minister," merely that he might add to them his declaration that the noble lord in the blue riband had used no other influence as a minister, than the fair influence of his own character and abilities; meaning at the same time that the remark was a compliment, that it should also serve to wipe off the sarcasm of the right honorable gentleman from those of the noble lord's former friends, who were at this time so faithfully attached, for no corrupt motive doubtless, to the right honorable gentleman. Mr. Sheridan next took notice of Lord Mulgrave's declaration, that Sir Cecil Wray was an honest, plain man, who had no view but a seat in parliament. If that was the case, what was Lord Hood, who had shewn by his conduct that he was not very desirous of a seat there? Mr. Sheridan commented on the strange conduct of a man of Lord Hood's character, who certainly should act for himself, and be above condescending to be the tool of any set of men whatever. He took occasion also to pronounce a panegyric on Mr. Hargrave; and spoke of him in the most handsome terms. He said, he had no doubt in his own mind but that Mr. Corbett was bound by the act of 10 and 11 William, and that it was a miserable shift in those who pretended that he did not come within the meaning of that act, because in its clauses mention was made generally of mayors, bailiffs, under-sheriffs, &c. He spoke of the absurdities and inconveniences that were likely to arise from a frequent change of assessors. At present the votes at St. Anne's had been decided upon by rules and principles laid down by Mr. Hargrave; whilst votes exactly similarly circumstanced, had been decided upon by Mr. Murphy in St. Martin's parish, on different principles. For what they knew the high bailiff might again change his assessor; perhaps he might put his conscience in commission, and deliver it into the hands of three

attornies. He complained of the scrutiny on a variety of different grounds; and said the paying of the witnesses influenced their testimony. The noble lord had compared it to the payment of witnesses in courts of justice, whereas no two things could be more wide and distinct. In the one case, that of the scrutiny, there was no power to punish false testimony; in the courts of justice the witnesses gave evidence upon their oath, in the face of a court competent to punish them, and liable to indictment for perjury. In like manner, was the Westminster election to go before a committee of that house; it would go before a competent tribunal, before a tribunal armed with the proper powers to enforce attendance, and insure dispatch; whereas the high bailiff's court, as it was called, could do neither; it was the greatest burlesque of a court that ever was heard of, and a downright mockery of justice. Mr. Sheridan said, if they were to go on, and that house was to be persuaded to authorise a continuance of the scrutiny, new delusions must be found out to induce the house to come into a measure, that all the world would consider as a measure of ministerial tyranny. He trusted, however, that the house would see the matter in a very different light from that in which they saw it last year. They had then but just come from their elections; and their minds were agitated and inflamed with the clamor that had been artfully raised against the India bill. The case was now somewhat different; men's minds were cooler; they no longer looked at his honorable friend's conduct through the optics of prejudice. They had revived the recollection of his steady adherence to the cause of the people, and the cause of liberty. They admired his constant exertion in support of the constitution; and they wished he should be rescued from a persecution, as disgraceful to those who instituted it, as it was vexatious and oppressive to him. Before he sat down, Mr. Sheridan said, he

would address a few words to the right honorable gentleman opposite to him, not as a minister, but as a member of parliament, a friend to parliamentary reform, a point of view in which he was happy to consider him; he therefore wished to recommend to him something like a consistency of conduct. When the right honorable gentleman first declared his intention of putting himself at the head of the friends to reform, Mr. Sheridan said, he felt great pleasure, considering it as a most valuable acquisition of weight, authority, and strength. He entertained the same opinion of him in regard to reform, as ever; he had never doubted his sincerity; and he declared he spoke most seriously, when he assured him, he gave him his entire confidence in that respect; a gift, perhaps, which the right honorable gentleman might hold cheap, but he must permit him to tell him, that the honest confidence of one sincere and anxious friend of reform, though as humble and insignificant an individual as himself, was worth all the rotten support of a whole herd of flatterers and followers, attached only by their present interests, and ready to change with the first change of circumstances. Let him recommend it, therefore, to the right honorable gentleman, to preserve a consistency of conduct; and not while he was talking of purifying the representation of that house in general, to suffer so large a city as Westminster to stand disfranchised, and deprived of its right to representation, without having committed any one offence that merited, or in any sort justified so severe a punishment. How would the right hon. gentleman have liked, as he drove through the streets of that disfranchised city, a few days hence, in his way to the house, to hear the people cry out "There goes the Minister, who in his liberality is this day to give one hundred additional members to counties, and denies this city its legal and constitutional privilege of two representatives!" Let the right honorable gentleman

avoid this, by joining him that day in support of the original question, and let not the electors of Westminster again undergo what they underwent last year, the unconstitutional violence of being taxed while they were deprived of their representatives; and of having the money taken out of their pockets without their consent, which he could not consider otherwise than as monstrous an infringement of the principles of the constitution, as could possibly be committed. He hoped, therefore, the right honorable gentleman would be one of the foremost in support of the question first moved; and when he urged his anxiety to prevail upon him to lend the question his support, he really spoke not as a party man. (A loud laugh.) Mr. Sheridan repeated what he had said, and declared he was actuated by no feelings of political party in his conduct that day. As a party-man, he should be ready to exclaim, "Long live the scrutiny!" Every friend to his connections, actuated solely by views of party, must wish the scrutiny to go on. The right honorable gentleman would find he was right in what he said, if that house could be persuaded, which he trusted would not be possible, to do so absurd, and so unjust a thing, as not to order the High Bailiff to make an immediate return of the writ. In that case, the right honorable gentleman would find the scrutiny would entangle him in every step he took; it would be perpetually in his way, and would sooner or later throw him down. The scrape he had got into, his friends were sorry to see; and, to his knowledge, heartily wished him out of. Let the right honorable gentleman recollect, the path of recantation was not a new one to him; he had trod that path more than once. (Mr. Pitt said, across the house, in what, or when?) Mr. Sheridan answered, last year; when the coal-tax was given up; when the price at which the navy bills were to be paid off by the subscribers was altered; the right honorable gentleman having at the same time declared,

that he gave up that to clamour which he had before obstinately refused to reason and justice. He had conceded, in that instance, and upon a wretched plea; he might also be said to have retracted in regard to his India bill; for there certainly could not be a bill more unlike the one he had opened, than the right honorable gentleman's East India bill of the last year was, when it passed. Having said this, Mr. Sheridan once more pressed the Chancellor of the Exchequer to accompany him in leading the house out of its error; let them all tread back the mistaken road they had taken; and if the right hon. gentleman would put out his power as a Minister, and lend them the strength of his arguments as a man, he said, he would answer for it, they would honestly meet him, and be sure to carry their point.

The motion was negatived by a majority of 39; and the following amendment, proposed by Lord Mulgrave, carried, "That the Speaker do acquaint the High Bailiff, first, that he is not precluded by the resolution of this house, communicated to him on the 8th of June last, from making a return whenever he shall be satisfied in his own judgment that he can so do. And, secondly, that this house is not satisfied that the scrutiny has been proceeded in as expeditiously as it might have been.—That it is his duty to adopt and enforce such just and reasonable regulations, as shall appear to him most likely to prevent unnecessary delay in future;—that he is not precluded from so doing by want of consent in either party; and that he may be assured of the support of this house in the discharge of his duty."

FEBRUARY 17.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

Mr. Pitt moved for leave to bring in a bill, for better examining and auditing the public accounts of the kingdom.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to state to the right honorable gentleman that he was mistaken in a particular fact. The book he had alluded to was not an authentic voucher, prepared at the instance of the Treasury; but the private memorandum-book of an

individual. Mr. Sheridan reminded Mr. Pitt of what had at the time passed in debate on the subject of that book, and of the amendment that had been moved, changing the words of the original motion in two places; in one, the words, "It appears to this house," were changed to "This house having reason to believe;" and in the other, the words "amounting in the whole to forty-seven millions," were changed to "large sums of money."

Mr. Pitt admitted Mr. Sheridan was correct, and that he, Mr. Pitt, had erred in what he before said.

FEBRUARY 18.

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY.

Colonel Fitzpatrick acquainted the house, that he had in his hand a petition from the electors of Westminster, praying to be heard by counsel at the bar, in defence of their just rights and privileges, and to state new facts which they were not apprised of at the time of presenting their former petition. He stated the variety of difficulties and disadvantages they labored under; and that they conceived one great reason of the scrutiny being continued, was owing to the evidence which was adduced at the bar some days since being incompetent and defective. He desired the house to call to its recollection, that particular stress was laid, in a former debate, on Mr. Fox being shy of going into the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John. Since that debate, a fact had come out, which very much engaged the attention of the public, and which he conceived would surprise the house, when he came to relate, that the High Bailiff, the next day of meeting, after he received his new orders, in the presence of some hundreds of electors, and before several members of parliament, openly declared, and authorised them to state, "that an offer was made by the counsel for Mr. Fox, whilst in the parish of St. Anne, to go next into the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John; which proposition was refused by the counsel of Sir Cecil Wray." Therefore, whenever evidence of that fact was produced at their bar, he trusted they would put an end to so destructive a measure as the scrutiny; which was carrying on contrary to law or justice. In order to shew that he had not stated the petition falsely, he begged leave to read it; which he did as follows:—

"TO THE HONORABLE THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

"The humble petition of the persons, whose names are subscribed, in behalf of themselves, and several thousand electors.

"That your petitioners, understanding that a motion had been made in this honorable house, relative to the election for Westminster,

and that the High Bailiff of this city, and his two assessors, had been ordered to attend, abstained from desiring this honorable house to permit them to offer any evidence relative to the scrutiny carried on for Westminster, or to be heard by their counsel in support of their rights.

"That your petitioners have now reason to believe, that the evidence given at the bar of this honorable house, was defective and incompetent; and that farther material evidence may be laid before this honorable house, touching the said scrutiny.

"Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray this honorable house, that they may be permitted to produce such evidence, and to be heard by their counsel at the bar of this honorable house."

Mr. SHERIDAN stated the propriety of the petition, and that the evidence meant to be adduced could not be given before. The petition was couched in decent terms, and therefore, he presumed, might be heard; for he trusted no person would lay down the doctrine, that the proceeding of parliament was not liable to be arraigned.

The motion was agreed to.

FEBRUARY 21.

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY.

The order of the day for hearing counsel on behalf of the electors of Westminster, in support of their petition was moved and read. Colonel Fitzpatrick then moved "That the counsel be now called in," but before the question could be put on this motion, Lord Frederic Campbell moved an amendment, adding, "that the counsel be restrained from going into any matters but such as tend to prove the evidence offered at the bar of this house on the 9th;—defective and incomplete;—or such other matters as may have been discovered since the order of the house of the same date."

Mr. SHERIDAN was of opinion, that the noble lord's amendment would lead the house into a greater inconsistency than that from which he would be thought desirous to guard it; for the house having received, and caused to be read, a petition from some electors of Westminster, and ordered that they should have leave to be heard by their counsel in support of the same, the noble lord wanted to persuade gentlemen to make the house in the present,

reject what in the former it had adopted and ordered. This would be an inconsistency the more inexcusable, as there was not so much as a single argument advanced that could give a colour to such a proceeding. This petition, on which the electors wished to be heard, had no necessary connection with any other; and therefore it was a most curious circumstance, that, for fear any thing should be said about another petition, with which the present was unconnected, the counsel were to be restrained from speaking in support of the allegations of their clients, who had already received the leave of the house to plead their cause by proxy; but if their proxy was to be restrained from pleading in support of the petition, for what purpose could leave have been given. The petition was far from being disrespectful; for though the electors complained that they were deprived of their representations, they said they had paid their share of the taxes that had been imposed by a parliament in which they were not represented. In order to throw ridicule upon the amendment, he moved an amendment upon it, so that the amended amendment would run thus: "and that they be restrained from going into any matter not contained in the said petition, in support of which the petitioners had prayed, and obtained leave of the house to be heard by their counsel."

Mr. Sheridan afterwards defended his amendment, and contended that the prayer of the petition was not absolutely to order the high bailiff to make a return, but to take measures by which that object might be attained. If the house were so tenacious of consistencies, and that the high bailiff stood so much upon his oath, the house need only take away his discretion; they might withdraw that authority under which he conceived himself to act, and accept his return. This would sufficiently remove all the objections on the score of the high bailiff's conscience.

After this question was put, on Lord F. Campbell's amendment,

ayes 203; noes 145. *Mr. Erskine and Mr. Pigott being then called to the bar, the former addressed himself to the speaker.*

" Sir,

" As my learned friend and I cannot submit to the restraint which the House, in its wisdom, has been pleased to impose upon us, without departing from the positive instructions of the electors of Westminster, whose rights, under the law, we were engaged and prepared as lawyers, to assert and support, we must beg leave to withdraw ourselves from the bar."

They accordingly retired. The high bailiff was then called to the bar; and after an examination and further debate, it was decided by a majority of nine to continue the scrutiny.

MARCH 4.

OFFICE REFORM BILL.

Upon the question " That this bill be engrossed,"

Mr. SHERIDAN rose and said, he had no objection to the motion, nor to let the bill go to the third reading, when he flattered himself he should be able—certainly not to conceive the right honorable gentleman, but—to shew him that the present bill was absolutely and entirely unnecessary; because the Board of Treasury had all the powers the bill proposed to invest in commissioners vested in them already. Mr. Sheridan said, the minute of the Treasury which he had moved would, he trusted, bear him out in this assertion; but as it was not presented before Friday last, he really had not time to read it with sufficient attention to speak upon it at that moment; but he was pretty confident it was sufficient ground for him to stand on. At present, if he objected at all to the report, he should have moved, by way of amendment, to leave out the names of the commissioners, and to insert, in their stead, the names of the lords of the Treasury. But not seeing any particular reason to press the debate then, he would let the bill be made as good a bill as it possibly could be; and then, in its perfect state, argue against its principle. Mr. Sheri-

dan said farther, that the same argument that applied in objection to the former bill, applied in objection to the present. That objection had been used in the other house, where, when the former bill had been thrown out, complaint had been made of its being left to them to do dirty work, and to throw out a popular bill. Mr. Sheridan added, that the former bill had certainly been a bill the most nonsensical, absurd, and ridiculous, that ever was framed, and the authors of it had been heartily ashamed of it.

MARCH 8.

OFFICE REFORM BILL.

The order of the day, that this bill be read a third time, was moved and read.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to make good his assertions of the preceding day, relative to there being no necessity for any such bill ; as the board of treasury already possessed full powers to do every thing which the bill avowed for its object. He began by observing, that it was not the same bill as that of a former session, since at least four-fifths of the former bill were not in the present. He then stated, the minute of the board of treasury in Lord Shelburne's administration ; and reasoned upon it as a proof that an inquiry, similar to that proposed to be instituted by the bill, had been gone into. He quoted the minute of the board of treasury likewise in the Duke of Portland's administration, to prove that they had also ordered a similar inquiry. He next examined the qualifications of two of the three commissioners named in the new bill ; and urged the absurdity of appointing comptrollers of army accounts to reform the treasury ; to the control of which they were themselves subject. He said, he supposed the appointment of two such persons to the commission was for the sake of fair play ;

and that as the treasury had some time since reformed the comptrollers of army accounts, that they should now in their turn be permitted to reform the treasury. He dwelt on this for some time; and then went into a minute examination of the bill, clause by clause; arguing upon each, both in regard to the wording, the expression, and the style; and with regard to the necessity, expediency, and policy of the several provisos. He charged the Chancellor of the Exchequer with having shewn himself remarkably inattentive to the drawing of public bills; and said, he expected he would soon bring in a sweeping bill, to amend and explain every one of the revenue acts of the last session. The loose, careless, and unintelligible manner, in which they were, almost every one of them, drawn, had excited the contempt of the whole country. Accuracy of stile, and intelligence of expression were, he said, as necessary parts of an act of parliament, as the soundness of its principle, and the salutary effects of its operation. He pointed out the extravagant powers given to the commissioners by the clause that enabled them to send for persons, and examine them, when and where they pleased. He said, under such a boundless and unlimited authority, they might send for the right honorable gentleman opposite to him, or for the Speaker, to Bright-helmstone, or any other watering-place, and order them to bring all their papers with them. He said, he was aware that he was stating the case largely; but in considering a bill of that nature, he had a right to argue it in the extreme; and to shew to what an extent of absurdity, oppression, and injustice the letter of the bill went. After putting a variety of hypothetical cases, in order to present the defects of the bill the more glaringly, he said, it was not out of his recollection that, in answer to all he had urged, it might be said, the same powers were already given by an existing act of parliament,—the act instituting the commissioners of the public

accounts ; but he begged leave to shew that the act appointing commissioners of accounts, differed in some essential points from the present bill. In the first place, the commissioners of accounts had been loudly called for from all parts of the kingdom ;—an extraordinary and momentous occasion made it indispensably necessary. One hundred and fifty millions had been added to the national debt ; and the people demanded an investigation into the expenditure of so enormous a sum of the public money. That investigation could not be gone on with so well in any other hands, as in those of commissioners especially appointed for the purpose ;—Here then was a great necessity for appointing commissioners ; and for entrusting them with powers of an extraordinary nature ;—a necessity that justified the measure. In the present case, there was no such necessity ; the object was of little consideration ; and the board of Treasury was fully equal to it. The bill, in fact, had no great view worthy the means it authorised ; it was a rat-catching bill, instituted for the purpose of prying into vermin abuses. Again, the commissioners of accounts were men in no official situation, subject to the control of those into whose conduct they were to inquire. The new commissioners, he had already proved, were subject to the control of the Treasury. In the next place, the commissioners of accounts were from time to time to report their proceedings to parliament ; who were by that means to watch over their conduct. The new commissioners were to make no reports to parliament, but merely to the board of Treasury. A fourth matter of difference was, the commissioners of accounts were named by parliament ; the new commissioners by the crown ; which was to appoint a successor in case of death or resignation. Mr. Sheridan reasoned on these four essential matters, in which the act, instituting a commission of accounts, differed from the present bill. He concluded with saying, that he flattered

himself he had shewn that the present bill was unnecessary, that it was absurd, and that it gave powers of an alarming and unconstitutional nature.

Mr. Pitt having replied,

Mr. Sheridan rose to explain. He said, he wished the right honorable gentleman, instead of answering arguments that had not been used, had confined himself to such as had. He had not said one word of the high character of the Duke of Portland, Lord John Cavendish, or Mr. Montagu, but had spoken of the minute itself, to shew that an inquiry had been ordered. With regard to its being an inquiry into such fees and emoluments as were legal, it was that, and that only; because the board of Treasury knew that the heads of the different offices would of themselves take care to prevent any illegal fees being taken. Mr. Sheridan reminded the house, that he had stated four grand and essential points; in which the act appointing the commissioners of public accounts differed from the present bill; whereas it had not been attempted to answer him but in one—and in that most feebly. As to the act for appointing commissioners to receive the claims of the American refugees, the reading of which had been so triumphantly recommended to him, it was an act that gave no powers of an alarming, or an extraordinary nature; and therefore it was not of the least importance, constitutionally considered, whether the crown or parliament appointed the successor or successors in case of death or resignation.

The question was put and carried without a division.

MARCH 9.

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY.

On the 3rd of March Mr. Fox had moved "that the former resolutions of the house respecting the scrutiny should be rescinded and

erased from the journals." This motion it was, however, agreed to postpone to a future day, it being a late hour when proposed. On the 9th the order for resuming the adjourned debate was moved to be read.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to take notice, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had, in the course of his speech, glanced more than once at him; and insinuated that he was answerable for the questionable shape of the return, and the nature of the paper of the high bailiff, which had been ordered to be annexed to the writ for Middlesex.

The Speaker said, as the affair of the return had been adjusted in a very thin house, and that was a very full one, he would take that opportunity of stating the particulars of the transaction. The Speaker then stated, that in consequence of the last order of the house, relative to the scrutiny, the high bailiff and the deputy clerk of the crown had been at a loss, in what manner the return should be made out and received. That he had ordered the deputy clerk of the crown to attend the next day, to receive instructions of the house. That the deputy clerk of the crown had, in consequence, attended on the Friday; when he had thought it his duty to state to the house, the case of the writ for Elgin; and the house had ordered the return for Westminster to be annexed to the writ for Middlesex.

Mr. Sheridan thanked the Speaker for having given the house the information he had stated; and desired that it might be remembered that his idea had been to antedate the return, and to make it bear the same date as the writ; because it was extremely absurd to annex a return to the writ, bearing date later than the writ was in existence. There was, he said, a wide difference between the affair of Elgin and the present case. The precept for Elgin was dated within the return of the writ for Elginshire; but, by some accidental blunder, had not been returned to the sheriff, to be by him delivered into the crown office with his writ. The return for Westminster was, they all knew, dated many months after the 20th of May, 1784, the day on which the writ was returnable. Mr. Sheridan read to the house the resolutions of the same day; in order to shew them that the resolution implied, that the scrutiny was illegal;—a ground which his

friends had not once abandoned in the course of the business; but had always adhered to, as was evinced by their having kept uniformly to the same proposition. The right honorable gentleman opposite to him, Mr. Sheridan said, appeared to know but little about the act of parliament, to which he had referred as a statute, regulating the elections for London, and declaring a scrutiny there to be lawful. It is necessary very frequently, he added, for gentlemen to be acquainted with the history of the times in which particular acts passed, and the history of the circumstances under which they passed, to understand them perfectly. The act in question was not originally brought in as a bill for regulating the election of members of parliament to serve for the city of London, but for the election of mayors, sheriffs, and other city magistrates and officers. At the time, there had been great disturbances in London, upon the subject of choosing sheriffs; and matters had been carried with so high a hand, that the city was in danger of being without sheriffs,—a circumstance that would have been attended with infinite inconvenience. On the spur of the occasion a bill had been brought in to regulate the election of sheriffs and other city officers. While that bill was in the house, it was suggested by a member, that the city also held elections for members of parliament, and that it might be as well to introduce some clauses that might refer to them. Hence the present act, that the right honorable gentleman had argued upon, as if its sole and principal object had been to regulate the city elections of members of parliament. Mr. Sheridan read two extracts from the act, to shew that it only recognized the scrutiny on the election for sheriffs, as a *lawful* scrutiny; which, he said, it might well do; as the city had a right under its charter to make bye-laws, and a scrutiny on an election for sheriffs was sanctioned by those bye-laws; but the act in those clauses, which referred to the election by wardmotes, drop-

ped the word *lawful*, and only talked generally of a scrutiny, without recognizing its legality. Mr. Sheridan added some other arguments, all tending to convince the house, that what the right honorable gentleman had said, as to the necessity that they should extend their protection to the high bailiff who had been *drawn in* (as the right honorable gentleman had phrased it) by the house to go on with the scrutiny, amounted to nothing. Those arguments, he said, should have been urged before; because the house had withdrawn its protection from the high bailiff the moment they came to the former resolution, viz. that in which they set the high bailiff at liberty to make a return, without waiting for the orders of the house. Mr. Sheridan, before he sat down, contended that for the sake of consistency, all those gentlemen who had voted for the resolution of Tuesday, must vote for the motion of rescinding it now. Those who had uniformly defended the conduct of the high bailiff, and thought that a scrutiny carried on after the writ, under which the precept for the election for Westminster had been held, was a legal proceeding, he certainly did not expect would vote with him that day.

MARCH 14.

IRISH RESOLUTIONS:

Mr. Stanley presented a petition signed by many thousands of the manufacturers of the town and vicinity of Manchester, against the Irish Resolutions, and praying to be heard by counsel. Mr. Stanley wished they might be heard on the Thursday following. Mr. Pitt objected to the delay of three days, and moved that they should be heard on Wednesday.*

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked on the turn which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had given to the argu-

* 1. That it is highly important to the general interests of the British empire, that the intercourse and commerce between Great Britain and Ireland should be finally regulated on permanent and equitable principles, for the mutual benefit of both countries.

ments of his right honorable friend, (Mr. Fox) who had not said that the present petitions had been received on Friday, but that numbers would, in consequence of that, be received; and which he himself be-

2. That a full participation of commercial advantages should be permanently secured to Ireland, whenever a provision equally permanent and secure shall be made by the parliament of that kingdom, towards defraying, in proportion to its growing prosperity, the necessary expenses in time of peace, of protecting the trade and general interests of the empire.

3. That towards carrying into full effect so desirable a settlement, it is fit and proper that all articles not the growth or manufacture of Great Britain or Ireland, should be imported into each kingdom from the other reciprocally, under the same regulations and at the same duties, if subject to duties, to which they are liable when imported directly from the place of their growth, product, or manufacture; and that all duties originally paid on importation into either country respectively, "except on arrack and foreign brandy, and on rum, and all sorts of strong waters, not imported from the British colonies in the West Indies or America," shall be fully drawn back on exportation to the other.

4. That it is highly important to the general interests of the British empire, that the laws for regulating trade and navigation should be the same in Great Britain and Ireland; and therefore, that it is essential towards carrying into effect the present settlement, that all laws which have been made, or shall be made in Great Britain, for securing exclusive privileges to the ships and mariners of Great Britain and Ireland, and the British colonies and plantations, and for regulating and restraining the trade of the British colonies and plantations, shall be in force in Ireland in the same manner as in Great Britain; and that proper measures should from time to time be taken, for effectually carrying the same into execution.

5. That it is further essential to this settlement, that all goods and commodities of the growth, produce or manufacture of British or foreign colonies, in America or the West Indies, and the British or foreign settlements on the coasts of Africa, imported into Ireland, should, on importation, be subject to the same duties as the like goods are, or from time to time shall be subject to, upon importation into Great Britain.

6. That in order to prevent illicit practices, injurious to the revenue and commerce of both kingdoms, it is expedient that all goods, whether of the growth, produce, or manufacture of Great Britain or Ireland, or of any foreign country, which shall hereafter be imported into Great Britain from Ireland, or into Ireland from Great Britain, should be put, by laws to be passed in the parliament of the two kingdoms, under the same regulations with respect to bonds, cockets, and other instruments, to which the like

lieved would certainly prove true eventually. The right honorable gentleman had often taken an opportunity to comment with asperity on the papers which had been circulated among the people, and which

goods are now subject, in passing from one port of Great Britain to another; and that all goods, the growth, produce, or manufacture of Ireland, imported into Great Britain, be accompanied with a like certificate, as is now required by law, on the importation of Irish linens into Great Britain.

7. That for the like purpose it is also expedient that when any goods, the growth, produce, or manufacture of the British West India islands, shall be shipped from Ireland for Great Britain, they should be accompanied with such original certificates of the revenue officers of the British sugar colonies, as shall be required by law on importation into Great Britain; and that when the whole quantity included in one certificate shall not be shipped at any one time, the original certificate, properly endorsed as to quantity, should be sent with the first parcel; and to identify the remainder, if shipped at any future period, new certificates should be granted by the principal officers of the ports in Ireland, extracted from a register of the original documents, specifying the quantities before shipped from thence, by what vessels and to what port.

8. That it is essential for carrying into effect the present settlement, that all goods exported from Ireland to the British colonies in the West Indies or America, should from this time be made liable to such duties and drawbacks, and put under such regulations, as may be necessary, in order that the same may not be exported with less incumbrance of duties or impositions than the like goods shall be burthened with when exported from Great Britain.

9. That it is essential to the general commercial interests of the empire, that no goods of the growth, produce, or manufacture of any countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope, should be importable into Ireland from any foreign European country; and that so long as the parliament of this kingdom shall think it advisable that the commerce to the countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope shall be carried on solely by an exclusive company, no goods of the growth, produce, or manufacture of the said countries should be allowed to be imported into Ireland, but through Great Britain; and that the ships going from Great Britain to any of the said countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope should not be restrained from touching at any of the ports in Ireland, and taking on board there any of the goods of the growth, produce, or manufacture of that kingdom.

10. That it is necessary, for the general benefit of the British empire, that no prohibition should exist in either country against the importation, use, or sale of any article, the growth, produce or manufacture of the other ("except such as either kingdom may

he termed misrepresentations. But as those papers had contained merely a few extracts from Mr. Orde's speech in the Irish house of commons, the misrepresentations therefore which he had repro-

judge expedient, from time to time, upon corn, meal, malt, flour, and biscuits,") and that the duty on the importation of every such article, if subject to duty in either country, should be precisely the same in the one country as in the other, except where an addition may be necessary, in either country, in consequence of an internal duty on any such article of its own consumption.

11. That in all cases where the duties on articles of the growth, product, or manufacture, of either country, are different on the importation into the other, it is expedient that they should be reduced, in the kingdom where they are the highest, to the amount payable in the other; and that all such articles should be exportable from the kingdom into which they shall be imported, as free from duty as any similar commodities, or home manufactures of the same kingdom.

12. That it is also proper, that in all cases where the articles of consumption of either kingdom shall be charged with an internal duty on the manufacture, the same manufacture, when imported from the other, may be charged with a further duty on importation, adequate to countervail the internal duty on the manufacture, except in the case of beer imported into Ireland; such farther duty to continue so long only as the internal consumption shall be charged with the duty, or duties, to balance which it shall be imposed; and that where there is a duty on the importation of the raw material of any manufacture, in one kingdom, greater than the duty on the like raw material in the other, or where the whole or part of such duty on the raw material is drawn back, or compensated, on exportation of the manufacture from one kingdom to the other; such manufacture may, on its importation, be charged with a countervailing duty as may be sufficient to subject the same, so imported, to the same burdens as the manufacture composed of the like raw material is subject to, in consequence of duties on the importation of such material in the kingdom, into which such manufacture is so imported; and the said manufactures, so imported, shall be entitled to such drawbacks or bounties on exportation, as may leave the same subject to no heavier burden than the home-made manufacture.

13. That in order to give permanency to the settlement now intended to be established, it is necessary that no prohibition, or new, or additional duties should be hereafter imposed in either kingdom, on the importation of any article of the growth, product, or manufacture of the other, except such additional duties as may be requisite to balance duties on internal consumption, pursuant to the foregoing resolution.

14. That for the same purpose, it is necessary, farther, that no

bated belonged solely to the person who had acted under his authority. Whether that charge was just or not, it was impossible for him to say ; but it ap-

prohibition, or new, or additional duty, should be hereafter imposed in either kingdom on the exportation of any article of native growth, product, or manufacture, from thence to the other ; except such as either kingdom may deem expedient, from time to time, upon corn, meal, malt, flour, and biscuits.

15. That for the same purpose, it is necessary that no bounties whatsoever should be paid, or payable in either kingdom, on the exportation of any article to the other, except such as relate to corn, meal, malt, flour, and biscuits, beer, and spirits distilled from corn, and such as are in the nature of drawbacks, or compensations for duties paid ; and that no bounty should be granted on the exportation of any article to any British colonies or plantations ; or on the exportation of any article imported from the British plantations, or any manufacture made of such article, unless in cases where a similar bounty is payable in Great Britain, on exportation from thence, or where such bounty is merely in the nature of a drawback, or compensation of, or for duties paid, over and above any paid thereon in Britain.

16. That it is expedient, for the general benefit of the British empire, that the importation of articles from foreign states should be regulated from time to time in each kingdom, on such terms as may afford an effectual preference to the importation of similar articles of the growth, product, or manufacture of the other.

17. That it is expedient, that the copy-rights of the authors and booksellers of Great Britain should continue to be protected in the manner they are in at present, by the laws of Great Britain ; and that it is just that measures should be taken by the parliament of Ireland, for giving the like protection to the copy-rights of the authors and booksellers of that kingdom.

18. That the appropriation of whatever sum the gross hereditary revenue of the kingdom of Ireland (the due collection thereof being secured by permanent provision) shall produce, after deducting all drawbacks, re-payments, or bounties granted in the nature of drawbacks, over and above the sum of six hundred and fifty-six thousand pounds in each year, towards the support of the naval force of the empire, to be applied in such manner as the parliament of Ireland shall direct, by an act to be passed for that purpose, will be a satisfactory provision, proportioned to the growing prosperity of that kingdom, towards defraying, in time of peace, the necessary expenses of protecting the trade and general interests of the empire.

The 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 17th resolutions, are NEW.

The 12th and 18th resolutions are ALTERED.

The words marked with inverted commas, in the 3d and 10th resolutions, are NEW.

peared to all, that the two ministers differed exceedingly in their statements. So great indeed had the difference been, that if he gave credit to Mr. Orde's assertions, as an English member of parliament, he could not vote for the propositions ; and were he to assent to all that the Chancellor of the Exchequer here had advanced, as a well-wisher to Ireland, he most certainly would reject his proffers. That right honorable gentleman, he observed, had disclaimed any assistance from the reports of the committee of Council, and had thereby informed the house, that those reports were intended for no other purpose than to justify, if possible, a measure which was already determined. The right honorable gentleman had insisted, that the tendency of the general resolution was clearly known before his declaration of last Friday; that the manufacturers, however, had not so understood it, he could bring abundant proofs ; and he would appeal to the consciousness of, perhaps, a majority in that house, whether it was clear even to them. Another assertion of the same right honorable gentleman had been, that all the merchants, manufacturers, &c. who had applied to him, had all their apprehensions quieted, and departed in perfect satisfaction.

To prove how equally ill-founded this assertion had been, Mr. Sheridan proceeded to read an advertisement from Mr. Wedgwood, whom he complimented highly as a man of intelligence and probity ; and the committee at the London Tavern, stating, that they had by no means conceived the tendency of the general resolution, nor had, until now, viewed it as conclusive and final ; and therefore summoning those concerned to consider on means to avert the impending evil. These, he observed, were gentlemen who were supposed to have had their disquiets removed by the Minister ; if they laboured under this misconception, why should it not be argued that a similar delusion had also prevailed with others ? The right honorable gentleman (Lord North) had

stigmatized the grants made to Ireland, by the noble lord in the blue riband, in the year 1780, as rash and inconsiderate concessions. He should now be extremely cautious, lest the precipitancy of the present moment might justify, in future, an appellation of keener and more deserved severity.

*Mr. Pitt's motion was withdrawn, and a proposition made by Lord North, that the Commissioners of Excise and Customs should be ordered to attend the next day; * carried.*

APRIL 11.

TAXES.

Mr. Pitt moved, "That an amount of the net produce of the taxes for the quarters ending 5th of January, 1784 and 1785, and of those ending 5th of April, 1784 and 1785, should be laid before the house." He took an opportunity of observing, that the new taxes which had been laid on in the last session, afforded such a promise of being productive as he would here make the house feel perfectly satisfied in the choice that had been made of them.

Mr. SHERIDAN took notice of the very great fallibility of general and loose calculations in matters of finance; and seemed to think the right honorable gentleman had relied too much on grounds, that would, when examined minutely, be found to fail him. To multiply by four, Mr. Sheridan said, was certainly no very difficult mode of calculation; but he could not conceive that the last quarter's amount of the produce of the taxes could fairly be stated to be a criterion, by which it could be decided,

* On the 15th, the Commissioners were called in, and directed to take into their consideration the following question; and be ready to deliver their opinions when they should be called upon again to appear before the house:—

Question.—“Whether the resolutions of the Irish parliament of the 12th of February, if carried into execution, are likely to affect the execution of the laws of the Boards of Customs, or Excise, for the protection of trade, in the collection of their revenues; and in what manner? And, also, whether these resolutions would make any alteration, with respect to the duties, drawbacks, bounties, and prohibitions, on the trade and manufactures of this kingdom.”

with any tolerable degree of certainty, what the produce of the taxes would be upon the Midsummer and the Michaelmas quarters of the present year. He declared, he believed, that upon inquiry it would be found, that the whole year's produce of several of the right honorable gentleman's taxes of the last session had been paid in the course of the last quarter, which would naturally cause the amount of that quarter's produce to swell in its size, and exceed in a pretty considerable degree the produce of the preceding quarters. The taxes he alluded to, were, he said, the hat license tax, the house tax, the game licenses and deputations, and several other of last year's taxes, that were to be paid in a round sum once every year. From the manner in which the right honorable gentleman had stated his computation of the probable amount of the whole produce of the four quarters of the present year's taxes, the house might possibly be deceived into a belief, that there was not any deficiency in the produce of the right honorable gentleman's taxes of the last year; and that they would really bring the sum for which they had been given, viz. 900,000*l*. This, however, he had good reason to believe, was by no means likely to turn out to be the fact; on the contrary, he was induced to imagine, that the produce would fall short of 900,000*l*. in the gross sum of 400,000*l*. The right honorable gentleman, he observed, had stated, that 190,000*l*. was to be deducted from the three millions and sixty-six thousand pounds, the amount of the produce of the taxes for the quarter, ending April 5, 1785, the produce of the taxes of the last session for that quarter. Admitting, therefore, for the sake of argument, 190,000*l*. would be the produce of the other quarters on the same account, still the aggregate would fall considerably short of 900,000*l*. But he must go farther, and contend, that so large a sum as 190,000*l*. was not likely to be produced by the taxes of 1785, upon each of the two quarters to come; and that,

for the reason he had already stated, viz. because the whole year's amount of several of the taxes of the last year had been paid in the course of the past quarter. As the right honorable gentleman had declared, the house could not have too much information on the subject before them, Mr. Sheridan said, he should move for an account of the produce of all the taxes of the last year, by which alone the house could determine, how far their amount fell short of the sum for which they had been given; and how far the insinuation, that the right honorable gentleman's taxes were more unexceptionable and efficient than those of other financiers was founded.

The question was put and agreed to.

APRIL 20.

TAX ON COTTONS, COTTON-STUFFS, &c.

A motion was made by Mr. Pitt, for leave to bring in a bill, "to explain and amend an act passed in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of His present Majesty, for imposing a duty, by excise, on certain cotton manufactures, and to repeal so much of the said bill as imposed a duty on plain cottons and fustians." Mr. Fox seconded the motion. The Earl of Surrey moved an amendment, for the repeal of the act altogether. Mr. Pitt having, in his speech, thrown out an imputation on the evidence of the Manchester manufacturers.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, not, he said, to vilify the right honorable gentleman, but to declare, that the right honorable gentleman had most unjustly cast aspersions on the Manchester manufacturers, who, by no means, merited such treatment; on the contrary, their evidence was unquestionably founded, and the whole of their conduct had been most laudable. Mr. Sheridan stated, that he had spent part of the summer in Lancashire, and had been a witness to the infinite pains the manufacturers had taken to keep their numerous workmen quiet, and to preserve the peace of the country. He rose principally, Mr. Sheridan said, to impress more strongly the idea suggested by his right honorable friend, viz.

the reprobation of the doctrine of giving that to prejudice, which had been refused to reason. Such doctrine was the way to raise clamor, and to throw the whole country into confusion. It was pointing out a mode of obtaining the repeal of a tax, that could not but be attended with the most mischievous consequences; and therefore, to obviate it, and to prove to the world, that whatever might be the rule of conduct adopted and followed by His Majesty's Chancellor of the Exchequer, as an individual, the house of commons did not act by so strange a rule. He should move an amendment, which was, to insert after the word *that*, a few lines, the purpose of which amounted to a resolution, "that it appeared to the committee, that the manufacturers of Manchester would be so much aggrieved and injured, if the tax on fustians, cottons, and cotton stuffs, &c. &c. imposed by an act of the last year, were suffered to continue; that the manufacture would be materially detrimented, and, perhaps, entirely ruined; therefore it was the opinion of the committee, that leave be given to bring in a bill to explain and amend," &c. &c. Mr. Sheridan moved this amendment regularly.

Mr. Rolle charged Mr. Sheridan with having made an inflammatory speech, with a view to excite alarm and discontent in the country. He said, he would not say who it was that went down to Lancashire to stir up the manufacturers, to set them against the taxes, and to promote tumult and discontent. Neither would he say who it was that distributed, or caused to be distributed, seditious and inflammatory handbills, and had them circulated all round the country; but the fact was so: and if he could bring the proof home to the party he suspected, he would take the proper steps to have his head stuck upon Temple Bar. Mr. Rolle charged Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Fox with having shifted their ground. The first of them had seconded the motion, and declared he approved highly of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's conduct, and now the right honorable gentleman had said, he would vote against the motion he promised to second; this was, in his opinion, abandoning and deserting ground, once taken, in a most shameful manner.

Mr. Fox said, with regard to the empty threat of having heads stuck upon Temple Bar, he knew not of any act which made circulating handbills a capital offence; but he was ignorant of any such

fact, if the honorable gentleman had alluded to him. His honorable friend, so far from having made an inflammatory speech, tending to alarm the country, and create discontents and clamor against the taxes, had done the direct contrary; his whole speech, and the amendment he had moved, had obviously been calculated to guard against alarms, and to prevent clamor from arising against other taxes, in consequence of the repeal of the tax on fustians. With regard to the charge of having shifted his ground, he had not shifted any ground; he had said, he approved of the motion, and approved of letting the tax remain on the printed cottons. He did so still; but a point of order having since been started, which struck him to be well founded, he must necessarily vote accordingly. If the honorable gentleman called that shifting his ground, to that accusation he begged leave to plead guilty. With regard to what the honorable gentleman had said, he would not speak; he presumed the honorable gentleman was too much a man of honor to assert what he knew he could not prove.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to say, that his right honorable friend must certainly have mistaken the honorable gentleman, because the honorable gentleman had said nothing but what was a defence of his argument; for what was his argument, but an argument to prevent the public from being misled, and thence alarmed? With this view, he had moved an amendment, declaring the reasons for which the house agreed to repeal the tax on fustians. The charge of making inflammatory speeches, lay at the door of the right honorable gentleman opposite to him, if it lay any where, because the right honorable gentleman had said, he repealed the tax on account of the prejudices of the manufacturers, and not because it was burdensome and oppressive. Mr. Sheridan declared he did not think it necessary to make any reply to what the honorable gentleman had not said; and with regard to the handbills, he really knew nothing about them; but he could easily conjecture why the honorable gentleman was so sore about publications. The handbills were not the compositions that hurt him, but compositions less prosaic, but more popular, he was afraid, had made him so sore. [Here a general laugh.]* Mr. Sheridan

* Mr. Sheridan alluded to a popular satire, entitled, "*Critiques on the Rolliad*;"

said, he was aware that the honorable gentleman had suspected, that he was either the author of those compositions, or some way or other concerned in them; he did assure him, upon his honor, he was not, nor had he ever seen a line of them till they were in print in the newspaper.

Mr. Rolle said, he held the author of the compositions alluded to, be he whom he would, in sovereign contempt, as well as his works; but as the cap fitted the honorable gentleman and his right honorable friend, they were welcome to wear it. He saw he had touched a sore place. With regard to there being no act to prevent the circulating of seditious handbills, for the sake of creating discontent in the country, if there was no such act, there ought to be one; and if he knew the author, as a member of parliament, he declared he would take the proper steps to have him punished. He persisted in charging Mr. Fox with having shifted his ground, and said no man living should make him abandon his ground either in that house or out of it.

Mr. Sheridan again replied, and said, while the honorable gentleman talked at random, he should take no notice of it; but if he charged him with being concerned in circulating any seditious handbills, he would answer him both there and elsewhere, very plainly, and very coarsely. Mr. Sheridan having said this, touched upon his amendment, which several gentlemen pressed him to give up, to which he consented.

The amendments were disposed of, and the original motion passed.

MAY 9.

TAX ON FEMALE SERVANTS.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, not, he said, to make any very ludicrous remarks on the proposed tax on female servants, though he could not but imagine, if it were persisted in, it would occasion more ridicule than all the cheerfulness of the right honorable gentleman would be able to cope with. He rose to state, that he was seriously of opinion, that it was a most unwise tax, and a tax that the public would never

be easy under. Indeed the right honorable gentleman, in opening it, had fallen into an egregious error, and applied a principle to it that by no means could be supported, as a principle equally applicable to the proposed increase and gradation of increase of the tax on male servants, and to the intended tax on female servants. The keeping a number of male servants was indisputably a luxury; and the making those who chose to keep a number pay in proportion to it, was perfectly fair and reasonable; but the case was far otherwise with female servants. It did not follow, because a family kept any number above two or three, that they were more opulent, and more able to pay taxes, than those who kept only one or two. In many cases, where three or four female servants were kept, the sole reason was the great number of children the family had, and which necessarily required that more servants should be kept to look after them. Mr. Sheridan said what he chiefly rose for was to point out, that in arguing upon the money to be raised to pay the interest of the four millions to be funded, the right honorable gentleman had allowed for 240,000*l.* just as if that fund really existed; whereas, in fact, there was no such fund. This Mr. Sheridan explained, by stating, that last year Mr. Pitt had proposed raising enough to pay the interest of six millions of navy debt, which he had declared it was his intention to fund this year; but that, in fact, no such money was raised. Through inadvertency also, a circumstance had happened, of which, perhaps, the right honorable gentleman was not apprised; and it was this: in all the bills of the last year, the produce of the tax made the subject of each bill, had been uniformly appropriated to the payment of the interest of the six millions navy. To prove this, Mr. Sheridan read a clause from one of the acts of the last year, and observed, that a similar clause had been inaccurately suffered to be inserted in each bill. It should, therefore, he said, have been a part of the duty of the right honorable

gentleman to have provided that day for raising the 240,000*l.* as well as the other sums that constituted the 413,000*l.* he wanted. With regard also to the taxes of last year, which he had given for 600,000*l.* Mr. Sheridan declared, they neither had, nor, he believed, ever would raise 500,000*l.* After suggesting this, he recurred to the proposed tax on female servants, which he made some farther remarks upon, and said, it ought at least to be balanced with a tax on single men, who certainly were a description of persons less useful to the community than men who were married, and had families. He commented at great length; and concluded with declaring, that the tax on female servants could be considered in no other light than as a bounty to batchelors, and a penalty upon propagation.

Mr. Pitt having replied,

Mr. Sheridan also spoke in explanation, declaring that the right honorable gentleman either did not or would not understand him. He had not said, that it was the duty of a chancellor of the exchequer immediately to come forward and propose a new tax as soon as he discovered a deficiency in any of his former taxes; what he had said was, that there was no fund in existence that could be applied towards the payment of the interest of the six millions of navy debt, that the right honorable gentleman had last year attempted to provide for. With regard to Lord John Cavendish's taxes, which the right honorable gentleman had so unnecessarily lugged into the debate, he had again and again said they were taxes unavoidably brought forward, when there had been but a very short time to consider them previously to their being proposed; and that, all the circumstances of the case considered, it was easy to account for their being deficient.

Afterwards Mr. Pitt moved a string of resolutions, containing all his proposed taxes. After which the house was resumed, and the report ordered to be brought up on the following day.

MAY 10.

WAYS AND MEANS.

On the first resolution, ("That towards raising the supply granted to His Majesty, the further sum of one million be raised by loans on exchequer bills, to be charged upon the first aids to be granted in the next session of parliament; and such exchequer bills, if not discharged with interest thereupon, on or before the 5th of April, 1786, to be exchanged and received in payment in such manner as exchequer bills have usually been exchanged and received in payment") being read a second time,

Mr. SHERIDAN rose just to remark, that, in his opinion, it was going upon a wrong principle to make imaginary funds liable to pay the interest of a debt, as was the case in the taxes of last year being deemed efficient, and taken for the sum for which they were intended, when, in fact, no such fund existed; it was, therefore, appropriating a non-existing fund, to pay the interest to which the house was pledged.

Mr. Pitt having spoken on the female servant tax,

Mr. Sheridan said, the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) began his speech with a promise of not going into what he thought his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox) had broached; and he believed the house would join him in regretting, that he had not deviated a little in this instance from the usual mode of fulfilling his promises. He could not help remarking, however, that the right honorable gentleman, as his custom was, had fixed upon the time, of all others, most convenient for his purpose to make his charge when the noble lord (Cavendish) was absent. Every body knew it was not the habit or manner of that noble lord to magnify his own importance, and celebrate his personal exertions at the expense of his coadjutors in office. He never arrogated to himself the distinction of being the minister of the crown, or king's minister; this mode of speech he left for the right honorable gentleman, whom it better became; but he suspected the ho-

norable gentlemen with whom he acted might not thank him very cordially for his assiduous endeavors to lessen their official consequence. He did not perfectly understand what was meant by supporting a minister in the general line of his politics, and not participating in the merit or demerit of his measures. He doubted, at the same time, whether some of these, at least, did not in part originate with a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Jenkinson) whom he saw in his place. He had moved for the extraordinaries of the army, and army estimates, which constituted most of the expense incurred by that fatal war; certainly this was bearing a part in accomplishing the system which it was still part of the present politics not to forget. Where, therefore, the right honorable gentleman's mighty distinction between those who befriended one party, and those who befriended the other, lay, he knew not. But the truth was, his right honorable friend had made a coalition which he had avowed and defended; whilst the right honorable gentleman opposite to him took every opportunity of declaring, that he had made a coalition with a set of men whom he was ashamed of. As to the tax, it struck him in every way objectionable. The right honorable gentlemen imagined that it would not be evaded, because, in the case of single servants, it was only half-a-crown, and in no case above ten shillings. But he wished gentlemen to recollect, that in many families one servant was often kept rather out of charity than from any very urgent necessity. Her wages, to be sure, was trifling; but she would, in consequence of this tax, subject the family where she was, to thirty shillings a year more than they would otherwise pay. He thought, therefore, that the tax operated against humanity; and he would certainly give it all the opposition in his power, both in this and every other stage of its progress.

It was stated by Mr. Jenkinson, in reply, "that the tax would

affect only the masters of families, not the servants; and he was sure no man would turn away any servant for half-a-crown." To this

Mr. Sheridan replied, that the right honorable gentleman had certainly mistaken the point in question, as no one had supposed that a family would turn off a servant for half-a-crown; but that where three were kept, one of them would probably lose her place; that the tax, which would otherwise be thirty shillings, might by that means be reduced to ten: consequently the tax fell on the female, whom, in this manner, it deprived of bread.

The house divided on the resolution; ayes 97; noes 24; majority against the women 73.

MAY 23.

IRISH PROPOSITIONS.

The house having resolved into a committee, the Chairman read the following resolution:—"Resolved, that it is highly important to the general interests of the British empire, that the laws for regulating trade and navigation should be the same in Great Britain and Ireland; and therefore that it is essential towards carrying into effect the present settlement, that all laws which have been made, or shall be made in Great Britain, for securing exclusive privileges to the ships and mariners of Great Britain, Ireland, and the British colonies and plantations; and for regulating and restraining the trade of the British colonies and plantations, shall be in force in Ireland (by acts to be passed in the parliament of that kingdom) in the same manner as in Great Britain; and that proper measures shall from time to time be taken for effectually carrying the same into execution."

Mr. SHERIDAN asked if the words "by acts to be passed in the parliament of Ireland," had really been moved on Friday last; for he did not recollect to have heard them till the moment the Chairman had read them.

Mr. Taylor replied in the affirmative.—Lord Beauchamp proposed, as an amendment, to leave out the words from "Ireland," to the words "and that proper measures should be taken," &c.

Mr. Sheridan rose next, and contended that it was fair to argue, that the proposition was a direct attempt to legislate for Ireland; and not the less so

in consequence of the amendment. It was therefore, he said, insidious in the last degree, for Mr. Orme not to have stated it to the Irish parliament, to whom the business had been opened in a very different manner. Mr. Sheridan declared that the voting resolutions to bind Ireland down to pass such and such laws, without enabling her to go even into a committee with the bills, was crippling that right of legislation which she had claimed, and we had admitted; and leaving her the mere shadow of independence, as a sovereign state, instead of the substance. He therefore contended that it was probable, in the highest degree, that the resolution under consideration would cause great alarm, and excite much constitutional jealousy in Ireland.

The house divided on the amendment, ayes 36 ; noes 194.

MAY 30.

IRISH PROPOSITIONS.

It was moved by Lord North, that the resolutions should be carried up to the lords. On their being read, when the clerk came to the second, viz. "that it is the opinion of this committee that a full participation of commercial advantages should be permanently secured to Ireland, whenever a provision, equally permanent and secure, shall be made by the parliament of that kingdom towards defraying, in proportion to its growing prosperity, the necessary expenses in time of peace, of protecting the trade and general interests of the empire." The right honorable W. W. Grenville moved, as an amendment, that the first line of the resolution, "That it is the opinion of this committee" should be left out, and in its stead the following words be inserted, "That it is consistent with the general interests of the revenue, manufactures, commerce, and navigation of this country." This amendment was carried without opposition.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that the latter part of the resolution appeared to him very objectionable; inasmuch, as it went to tie Ireland down to a specific provision for the support of the navy, which, in all probability, would in the end prove much less beneficial to this country, than if parliament had trusted to the generosity and liberality of Ire-

land. This part was objectionable on more accounts than one. In the first place, the provision was to be secured in the time of peace only, so that in war, Ireland might stand neuter. He would suppose, however, that it was expected, that in time of war, that country would make exertions in favor of this; the consequence of course was, that in this instance, England, instead of stipulating for any specific assistance, relied entirely upon the generosity of Ireland. Why then should there not be the same reliance in time of peace? Why should there exist an appearance of distrust? Why make Ireland fancy she had room to think, that whilst England, by not having her power diverted by foreign war, felt herself able to insist upon treaties, would stipulate for certain services; but would not speak of stipulations for assistance in war; as if conscious, that in such a case, she should not be able to enforce the observance of the stipulation? It were folly indeed to expect, that Ireland, accustomed during peace to act according to the letter of a specific agreement, and with a friend who placed no confidence in her, should, in time of war, act upon principles of liberality. The way to obtain liberal succours at all events was, at no times to betray marks of diffidence in the honor and generosity of those we have to deal with. The Irish, when they saw limits placed to the confidence that ought to be reposed in them, would naturally set bounds to their own generosity, and never exceed in their grants the letter of their agreement with this country. But this stipulation for a specific provision from Ireland, under the regulation marked out in the restriction, was not, in his opinion, less constitutional than impolitic.

The constitution of Ireland was the same as that of England; and what would violate one, would, of course, amount to a violation of the other. In England, a vote of a perpetual army, or even of a perpetual navy, over which parliament was to have no

control, would effectually destroy the constitution, and render the parliament unnecessary. Now, what was proposed to Ireland? Nothing less than that she should vote, or give by an irrevocable act to the crown, a specific sum of money, for the support of either army or navy; and consequently an army, or body of seamen, might be employed, not only without the consent of parliament, but even in spite of it. He was right in assuming, that seamen or soldiers might be employed constantly, and paid out of this perpetual and irrevocable fund, which would render the crown independent of the people; because, though the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had said, on a former occasion, that the money arising from the surplus of the sinking fund, should be laid out in Ireland, in purchase of provisions, &c. for the use of the navy; yet it might so happen, that Ireland would not always be a provision country, which she certainly would not, if by the present plan she should so improve in manufactures, as to turn her thoughts to them from feeding of cattle. In that case, the money, if laid out in that country, must be expended in the maintenance of soldiers or sailors; and then there would exist a body of men over whom the parliament could have no control. The extent of the numbers made nothing to the principle, which would be as much violated by a vote in perpetuity of a support of three regiments of guards, as for a perpetual army. He concluded by moving an amendment of the resolution, that the following words be left out, viz. "Whenever a provision equally permanent and secure shall be made by the parliament of that kingdom, towards defraying, in proportion to its growing prosperity, the necessary expense in time of peace, of protecting the trade and general interests of the empire:" and that instead of them be inserted, "Great Britain confiding in the well-known generosity and liberality of Ireland, that in proportion to her growing prosperity, she will contribute towards defraying

the expenses both in peace and war, of protecting the trade and general interests of the empire." To this amendment he presumed there would be no objection in Ireland; as it was founded on an expression of that nature, in an address moved by Mr. Grattan, in the Irish house of commons.

Mr. Sheridan in a subsequent speech observed that previous to a determination on this question, he wished to explain some circumstances which he conceived to have been misunderstood, and which he was anxious the house should attend to. There would, in consequence of these regulations, be many duties which at present were only temporary in Ireland, that in order to bear with the like duties in England, which were securities for the public debts, must now be rendered perpetual. This would add principally to the hereditary revenues of Ireland; and would be applicable to the purpose of keeping a standing army. Here then arose a double consideration;—first, a great and important sum would be entrusted, where the constitution of the country was always jealous it should be placed, particularly for such purposes; and secondly, this perpetual provision being made, there would no longer exist a necessity for assembling the parliament, as frequently as the safety of our constitution and that of Ireland required. It might be answered, that parliament must be assembled, in order to bring in the bills, and take the regular estimates laid before them; but he had experience to bear him out, in apprehending that this principle, important as it was, would be liable to violation;—for notwithstanding a resolution of the last parliament of England constituted it a high crime and misdemeanor for any person to expend any sum of the public money, except such as had been already appropriated; the right honorable gentleman at the head of the treasury, in defiance of that resolution, was bold enough to employ very large sums to such purposes as he thought proper.

The question being then put on the amendment, it was negatived without a division.

On putting the fourth resolution, vide note in page 142, Lord Beauchamp moved to leave out all the words from "Great Britain and Ireland." His lordship's amendment was negatived. Mr. Eden moved to insert a provision for extending the proposed adoption by Ireland of certain laws to be originated in Great Britain, to English acts of parliament, "concerning seamen."

Mr. SHERIDAN rose as the question was going to be put; and said, that as the persevering silence of ministers made it impossible for him to guess whether they meant to admit the amendment or not; and as they had pursued the same conduct in rejecting the amendment moved by the noble lord near him, which he had the honor of seconding; he would take that opportunity of speaking to the resolution generally as it had been framed, and defended by the minister, before it should become still more objectionable, by extending the powers it was to lodge in Great Britain over the sister kingdom. This, at least, Mr. Sheridan said, was a question on which gentlemen were no longer to hear the desires and wishes of Ireland urged as arguments for their concurrence; it was a matter wholly and entirely new. It was so far from being any part of the offer made by Ireland, that it had not even been hinted at, or alluded to in the Irish parliament;—it never had been once glanced at by Mr. Orde;—it formed no part of the consideration recommended to the attention of the parliaments of both kingdoms in His Majesty's gracious speech from the throne;—it was not to be found in the questions referred to by the investigation of the committee of privy council; and the right honorable gentleman himself (Mr. Pitt) in opening this business to the British parliament, had not uttered one word which tended to shew that this proposition was essential to the settlement proposed between the two kingdoms. The question then was, whether the new proposition now in debate, contained mat-

ter fit to be proposed from the parliament of this country to the parliament of Ireland? In his conscience, he thought it did not. It was injurious to make the offer, and it was folly to believe it could be accepted. It was not enough to say, that the parliament of Ireland ought not, or dared not agree to it: they had not the power to accede to it;—it would be a concession beyond the limits of their trust; they would betray the confidence reposed in them; and the Irish nation would spurn at the bondage which their degenerate representatives had no authority to engage they should submit to.

Much had been argued on a former day relative to the extent and spirit of this proposition. The event and conclusion of all those arguments from both sides of the house, warranted him now in asserting, that this resolution went, in the fullest extent, to a complete resumption of the right of external legislation, so lately exercised, but so solemnly renounced, by Great Britain over Ireland. It was unnecessary to repeat those arguments; no person would again attempt to maintain, that this was a measure of experiment, or that it was in the power of Ireland to possess herself of the greatest present benefits from this country, which so many gentlemen contended she would immediately obtain, as a transfer of British capital, and the establishment of British manufactures; and then, by refusing to place upon her statute book some act of this legislature which she was bound to have adopted, void and annul the whole of this settlement, and revert unmolested to her present situation. A full explanation had been given on this subject; the conclusions from which went distinctly to this, that the present settlement was final and perpetual. That the contracting parties in this momentous business being presumed to act with perfect foresight of the consequence of their irrevocable engagements, neither party could depart from any article stipulated, without breach of faith. Such an infraction in the

stronger power would be an act of despotism and oppression ; and would justify the utmost extent of resistance in the weaker. It would be a direct attempt to disengage herself from all connection with, or relation to, the empire ; and would authorise the rigor of coercion. This was the footing upon which the two countries must in future be understood to be united. Upon this view, it would be an imposition on common sense to pretend, that Ireland could in future have the exercise of free will or discretion, upon any of those subjects of legislation on which she now stipulated to follow the edicts of Great Britain ; and it was a miserable sophistry to contend, that her being permitted the ceremony of placing those laws upon her own statute book, as the form of promulgating them, was an argument, that it was not the British but the Irish statute which bound the people of Ireland. For his part, if he were a member of the Irish parliament, he should prefer the measure of enacting by one decisive vote, that all British laws, to the purposes stipulated, should have immediate operation in Ireland as in Great Britain ; choosing rather to avoid the mockery of enacting without deliberation, and deciding where they had no power to dissent.—Where fetters were to be worn, it was a wretched ambition to contend for the distinction of fastening our own shackles.

If this was a fair construction of the purport and necessary consequences of the resolution, was it a slight and trifling consideration, when we reflected on the solemn and decisive manner in which the faith of the two countries had been engaged on this subject ? Whether Great Britain should insidiously, by surprise, and collaterally, as it were, make a proposal which would argue in her a repentance of the bounty, or rather of the justice, which she had done to Ireland ; and which, if not accepted, would necessarily destroy for ever all confidence in that country towards Great Britain, on those great con-

stitutional questions which she had shewn were so near to her breast, and so valued above all other advantages she had either claimed or acquired? It had been solemnly stipulated between the two kingdoms, that "The right claimed by Ireland, to be bound in all cases whatever, only by laws made by the king, lords, and commons of Ireland, should never more be questioned, or questionable." This resolution did not question that right. No, certainly it did not; it only offered to bargain for it; and proposed conditions on which the right was to be relinquished for ever by Ireland. But who are the parties negotiating; and under what circumstances is the treaty carried on? A final commercial arrangement is declared to be necessary to the future good understanding between the two countries: and by this final arrangement, it is declared by Britain, to be an indispensable condition, that Ireland should give up all legislative authority in matters of trade and navigation; and this condition is not fairly put forward in the outset of the treaty; but Ireland is treacherously encouraged to demand a benefit, and then a price is exacted greater than any favor Britain can bestow; whilst by the manner of stating it, Ireland is at the same time given to understand, that there can never be peace or cordiality between the two countries till she acquiesces in the sacrifice.

When a strong power, conscious of its superiority, treats with a weaker one upon such terms, it may not question, indeed, the right to the possession wished for; but it does more;—it hints a menace on the consequence of withholding it: the letter of the compact is not infringed, but the spirit of it is violated. Here, Mr. Sheridan said, he would not enter into a discussion, whether it was not reasonable in any administration, at any time, to entertain an apprehension, that great difficulties might arise in the government of two countries, each possessing an independent legislature, especially in matters of

commerce and navigation. To argue theoretically on such a situation, undoubtedly many apprehensions might be justifiable; but what had been the event? It had not proved them to be well founded; but whatever fears were entertained on the subject, this he was sure of, that the only mode of treating with Ireland, in a point of such magnitude, was by fair, explicit, and ingenuous plain dealing. If the British government really thought it essential to the future good understanding, and to the common interests of the two kingdoms, that the power of legislating to particular objects should be lodged in one kingdom, only for the common benefit of both, and of consequence in that kingdom which was the head of the empire; it should have been distinctly so stated in the first overture made to the Irish parliament, as the basis of a permanent agreement. If then upon due deliberation, and full communication with their constituents, and with the country at large, the parliament of that kingdom had thought it advisable, and had been authorised to treat for the surrender of those rights which they had so lately deemed the only safeguard either of their commerce or their constitution; and which they gloried so much to have obtained by their own virtuous and spirited exertions; then undoubtedly, whatever he might have thought of their prudence, he should not have held himself at liberty to make the same comments on the proceeding. Instead of this, all had been delusion, trick, and fallacy: a new scheme of commercial arrangement is proposed to the Irish as a boon; and the surrender of their constitution is tacked to it as a mercantile regulation. Ireland, newly escaped from harsh trammels and severe discipline, is treated like a high-mettled horse, hard to catch; and the Irish Secretary is to return to the field, soothing and coaxing him, with a sieve of provender in one hand, but with a bridle in the other, ready to slip over his head while he is snuffling at the food. But this political jockeyship,

he was convinced, would not succeed. Ireland would spurn at any offer to which such a condition was to be annexed ;—she would now plainly see, that this alarming condition, now indeed declared to be the essence and vital principle of the whole settlement, though introduced as an after-thought, as it were, and as a consequence of the tenor of the requisitions made by Ireland, was no doubt the first original object, and contained the seed and source of the whole business. He was the more confirmed in this opinion, from recollecting many passages in the right honorable mover's speeches since he first opened this matter ; although it was not then thought prudent, even to hint that such a stipulation should be part of the treaty ; he constantly made it a topic of accusation against his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox) that he had permitted Ireland to assert the freedom of her constitution unconditionally, and without reserving to Great Britain a necessary control over her trade and navigation.

Here Mr. Sheridan went into a full defence of the conduct of his right honorable friend on that occasion ; he reminded the house of the circumstances of the times ; the situation in which Ireland then stood ; and maintained, that the declaratory statute which Ireland demanded to be repealed, was more disgraceful to the journals of that House, and more a libel on the principles of this country, than injurious to the people whom it insulted. But was there a man in that house who would stand up and say, that conditions ought to have been made with Ireland annexed to this concession, if a concession it might be called ? Was there a man who stated this to be his opinion at the time ? If the right honorable gentleman, who so frequently repeats this charge, has to plead in his excuse, that he was not then possessed of all that political foresight, and consummate sagacity, which three years experience had given him ; how came it that this new ally, the

right honorable gentleman by his side (Mr. Jenkinson) whose prudence and abilities were certainly not immature at that time, so far deserted his duty as never to protest, whilst the measure was in its progress, against the indiscretion and rashness of a minister, whom he had no reason to favor; nor once to warn him, that he was inconsiderately placing the two countries in a situation in which it was impossible for them to stand; and inducing parliament to relinquish a right, which it would be indispensably necessary, on the first opportunity, to resume. Fortunately for the peace and future union of the two kingdoms, no such miserable and narrow policy entered into the mind of his right honorable friend; he disdained the injustice of bargaining with Ireland on such a subject; nor would Ireland have listened to him if he had attempted it. She had not applied to purchase a constitution; and if a tribute or contribution had been demanded in return for what was then granted, those patriotic spirits who were at that time leading the oppressed people of that insulted country to the attainment of their just rights, would have pointed to other modes of acquiring them;—would have called to them in the words of Camillus, *arma aptare atque ferro non auro patriam et libertatem recuperare*.

But if he had been surprised at this sort of language coming from those gentlemen, he had been much more astonished at another right honorable gentleman's declaration, (Mr. Grenville) that when he had been in an official situation in Ireland, he had wished for, and meditated a settlement between the two countries, upon the principle of the present proposed system. Had the right honorable gentleman forgotten the second legislative act passed by this parliament, in acknowledgment of the constitutional rights of Ireland? Had he forgotten that that act was a measure of his administration? And did he remember the solemn pledge, there given, to remove for ever all doubt, that any power, but the

king, lords, and commons, of Ireland, should dictate, in a legislative capacity, to that country? The right honorable gentleman had stated, that this act had become absolutely necessary; for that Ireland, almost to a man, had conceived that the simple repeal of the 6th of George I. had not restored to them the security of their constitution, which yet remained to be acquired. If this was the case, and a bargain were necessary, then was the time for the right honorable gentleman to have proposed his conditions; and not to have permitted those for whom he obtained this new acknowledgment, to have conceived him to have been the champion for a more solemn and explicit renunciation of the legislative claims of Great Britain over Ireland, if he had in his mind a reserve, that a settlement was even then necessary, which should re-assert those claims, and degrade Ireland to her former state of servile dependence.

With regard to the state of Ireland, it was ridiculous to argue, that any circumstances had since occurred to justify or call for the present arrangement. It had been attempted to be proved in the report of the committee of privy council, that Ireland had begun to shew a hostile disposition towards Great Britain; and that she had passed two or three acts, imposing duties on some articles of British export. It was idle to reason from such trivial circumstances. One or two of these acts, it was known, had passed the Irish Parliament rather by stealth, and through inadvertency. No material principle, upon which the two countries were to remain connected, had been violated; and when we consider the perpetual shifting of the government and system in Ireland, that every three months wafted over a new Lord Lieutenant, the only wonder was, that those principles had been so steadily adhered to. The clamor and riots of Dublin had also been resorted to as pretences for this arrangement; this sort of argument had been sufficiently reprobated by

a right honorable friend of his (Mr. Burke) on a former day ; but if clamor was to be attended to, let the meaning of it, where there was any, be preferred to the noise. Had the Irish clamored for the present settlement, or for any one article contained in it? Had they been loud in demanding access to the British market, in preference to protecting duties? Had they requested to be tied for ever to the British monopoly in the West Indies, and to have the price of the commodities of those colonies increased upon them? Had they complained, that fortune had offered the trade of the United States of America to them without condition or restraint? Had they vehemently expressed their apprehensions, that the rich commerce of the east would speedily be open to them, if effectual measures were not taken to prevent it? Had they regretted that they were burdened with a surplus of the hereditary revenue? Had they called out, that they were tired of their legislative independence, and entreated to be relieved from it?—But the fallacy of stating such flimsy ground as the supposed cry of the populace, as the real origin, and spur of this important arrangement, was too obvious to be commented on. The true spring and incentive to this artful and complicated business evidently lurked in this fourth pernicious resolution; the tendency of which was of a piece with their whole system of government in Ireland; with the arbitrary and illegal proceedings of their agents in the business of attachments; and with their attacks on the liberty of the press; measures arguing a mind hostile to the true principles of constitutional freedom, and justifying us in presuming that similar steps would be pursued in this country, if they could be practised with equal impunity.

Mr. Sheridan now adverted to what the noble lord in the blue riband (North) had said, was his conception of the spirit of the proposition then in debate. The noble lord had very fairly

stated, that it was unquestionably a proposal on the part of the British parliament, that Ireland should, upon certain conditions, surrender her now-acknowledged right of external legislation, and return, as to that point, to the situation from which she had emancipated herself in 1782. The noble lord had also added, that though he might not approve of the manner and circumstances under which this offer was made, yet he sincerely hoped, that Ireland would forget both, and perceive her interest in acceding to the proposal. The noble lord was right in saying, that Ireland must forget, before she could consent; but she had more to forget than the insidious and unfair manner in which this proposal came to her; she must forget, that Great Britain ever had the power now required to be conceded to her; she must forget the use Great Britain made of it whilst she possessed it. And by what arguments is Ireland to be induced to relinquish this right? Can it be stated to her, that she has ever once exercised it to the injury of this country? No; but we are told, that it is possible she may do so; and is it not equally possible that Great Britain may abuse the trust, and employ this power to the oppression of Ireland? It is argued, that the malice of party, the interested views of mercantile speculation, or the folly of narrow politicians, may, at some time or other, lead Ireland, even at the expense of her own interest, to measures which might embarrass the trade and navigation of the empire. And has Ireland nothing to apprehend from party, from mercantile avarice, or from blind and narrow policy? If it is urged that England is grown too liberal and enlightened to justify any such apprehension on the part of Ireland, the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself contradicts this reasoning, by asserting that the two hundred thousand manufacturers, whose petitions are on the table, are all influenced either by the suggestions of faction, or blinded by prejudice and selfishness; in truth, there

is not a single argument which can be used as an inducement to Great Britain to attempt to resume this power, which does not equally apply as a motive to Ireland not to part with it; with this difference only, that fact and experience will justify the result of the one, but have afforded no pretence for the requisition from the other.

But this power, if returned to Great Britain, is to be returned with this qualification. The laws which Ireland is to be bound to adopt and to obey, are, "To enforce the same restraints, and to confer the same benefits upon the subjects of both countries." Here, then, arises a question which will necessarily be duly weighed, and duly considered by the Irish. Is it, or is it not, possible for Great Britain, under the title of "Laws for the regulation of trade and navigation, or for regulating and restraining the trade of the British colonies and plantations," to adopt restrictions, and enforce conditions, which may materially cripple and embarrass the trade and navigation of Ireland, without proportionably affecting the commerce of Great Britain. He took upon him confidently to assert, that this might be done in innumerable particulars. He had stated, for example sake, some instances upon a former day; he had stated, that Great Britain might restrain the trade and navigation between the colonies and these kingdoms to vessels of considerable burthen, and a proportionate number of seamen. England has large ships and numerous crews, Ireland has neither. The advantage of Ireland has been supposed to be her making more frequent voyages to the plantations, and for smaller cargoes. Such a measure of legislation as is alluded to, would evidently have a different operation on the commerce of the two countries. He had stated, that Great Britain, reserving the power of prescribing the form of original certificates to be given by the revenue officers of the colonies, and of requiring them to accompany the importation of every article

of colonial produce imported from Ireland into Great Britain, might, by limiting the time at which they should be allowed, and by various other means, entangle and distress the Irish trader; and the more so, as the restraint was not even to be reciprocal. He had stated, that Great Britain might make it a condition, that no ship should clear out a cargo from the West Indies, which did not take out a stipulated quantity of some British manufacture not to be obtained in Ireland; but it was unnecessary for him to multiply or argue upon examples. If he was wrangled out of one case, still the principle he went upon was not defeated; for he was not to be called upon to prove the probability of the instances he quoted, or that Great Britain would not injure herself were she to adopt them; because the whole of the present arrangement was built upon this foundation, that it was essential to the system that neither country should retain a power upon any terms to injure the commerce of the other.

But whether it was probable or not that Great Britain would in future exercise this right of external legislation over Ireland with justice and liberality, shutting her ears to prejudice and self-interest; still it must be admitted, that it was claiming a considerable sacrifice from the sister kingdom; and what were the advantages held out to her to induce her to make this sacrifice? He wished the house to view the whole of this matter, and not to confine their attention to the subject of the British market, which had been argued upon as if there was nothing else to be conceded by one side or acquired by the other. What was the present situation of Ireland in respect to all branches of commerce, independently of her intercourse with this kingdom? Here Mr. Sheridan went into a more minute detail than it is necessary for us to pursue, in order to shew the situation in which Ireland now stood in respect to her trade with our colonies, and with foreign countries, and that in which she was pro-

posed to be placed, should the system of arrangement, at present in contemplation, be adopted.

With respect to the West Indies, Ireland was to agree to forego every market but that of the British plantations; to give up the cheapest for the dearest; to lose the option at present possessed, of being supplied circuitously through Great Britain, upon the low duties, if she found it not to her advantage to apply to the direct trade of the whole of her consumption; to double her present duties on the article of rum; to impose not only equal port duties upon her exports, but to countervail every internal duty which Great Britain may impose upon any similar article of her own manufacture; so that if Great Britain was to lay a duty upon the export of her linen to those colonies, which would be of little injury to her, Ireland must do the same, though the reverse would be the consequence. In short, the whole was sacrifice and surrender on the part of Ireland. As to America, the difference lay in a word. Instead of a trade to that whole continent without restriction or duty, but what she should think proper herself to impose, she was to admit into her ports no articles of similar growth, produce, or manufacture to those of the British colonies, or which were liable to be imported from thence as such, but upon the terms that Great Britain should hereafter dictate. With Africa, she was to be placed upon the same footing as with the West Indies; and to India, she was to abandon all hope and prospect of intercourse with those countries to the end of time; and consent that an immovable boom should be placed from the Cape of Good Hope to the Straits of Magellan. Thus restrained and dependent, her prospects of European commerce were to be proportionably diminished. These sacrifices could not be disputed; and it was to be considered, that every article proposed to be abandoned by Ireland, was an advantage to which her title was not disputed;—an advantage that she held

as a right, and for which she had a claim to compensation if relinquished.

These then being the sacrifices which Ireland was to make in her prospects of an extended foreign commerce, where was to be her retribution? In what instance was the advantage in this treaty to be on her side? From whence was she to receive the boasted compensation?—The British market!—that was to be opened to her. There, and there only, was she to look for an equivalent for the numerous and important sacrifices she was to make both in commerce and constitution. He defied any man to have the hardihood to deny, for a moment, that in every other instance Ireland was not to be placed in an infinitely worse situation than that in which she now stands; and in which she stands by fair and acknowledged right. But how was this advantage to be given to her? Upon what terms was the British market to be opened? If he was to adopt the language and sentiments of those who propose this boon, he should answer, upon such terms as shall effectually prevent Ireland from ever profiting, in the smallest degree, by the concession. To this point all their arguments have tended;—to this all their evidence had been pointed; so that, if we were to give credit to the minister and his supporters, this equitable treaty, this bargain upon the basis of reciprocity, would prove neither more nor less than a direct fraud, cheat, and robbery; stripping Ireland of all the commercial advantages she had obtained, as well as of the constitution which secured them to her; and giving nothing in return, but a right to render herself odious in this country, by an attempt at a rivalship which could not be profitable to herself, though it might be mischievous to Great Britain. He was not inclined, however, to give credit to the minister's reasoning on this subject; and much less to the evidence he had brought to support it;—the greater part of which had been merely a libel on the character and

habits of the Irish nation ; nor did he, at the same time, go with the manufacturers of this country to the extent of the evils which they apprehended—many of their arguments were undoubtedly well founded, and the evidence they had given at the bar merited the most serious attention. There was one point, however, in which he most completely agreed with them ;—in their assertion, that if the Irish trader should be enabled to meet the British merchant and manufacturer in the British market, the gain of Ireland must be the loss of England. This was a fact not to be controverted on any principle of common sense or reasonable argument. The pomp of general declamation and waste of fine words, which had on so many occasions been employed to disguise and perplex this plain simple truth ; or still more fallaciously to endeavor to prove, that Great Britain would find her balance in the Irish market, had only tended to shew the weakness and inconsistency of the doctrine they were meant to support. The truth of the argument was with the manufacturers ; and this formed, in Mr. Sheridan's mind, a ground of one of the most vehement objections he had to the present plan. Ireland must not endeavour to rise on the ruin of the trade of Great Britain—she must not aim to thrive avowedly at the expense of the British manufacturer, however alluring the prospect ;—not justice and generosity alone, but interest and policy, would call upon her to desist from the attempt. Possibly at first she might find a profit and an advantage in the contest—but how was a great part of this advantage to be obtained ?—By means incompatible with the true spirit and principles which led to permanent commercial prosperity,—by means which had been stated at the bar, to form a great part of the apprehensions of those who petitioned against these propositions ;—by a lax execution of her revenue laws ;—by the corrupt countenance of her legislature to such a conduct ;—by stealing her own manufactures into this country ;—by

passing those of foreign countries for her own, by obtaining a transfer of capital, and enticing over artists and workmen, by false hopes and ill-founded prospects; in short, by smuggling, by evading, by defrauding, by conniving, by deceiving. The profit earned by such means, would, by the system they tend to introduce, be ruinous in the end to the country which practised them, while they would immediately deeply injure the sister kingdom, if she submitted to them; but that would not long continue; the consequence would be, that even the name of Irishman would become odious and detestable to the commercial interest of Great Britain; and Ireland would soon be taught to know, that while she was pressing, by all possible means, her own advantage from this article of the settlement, she had, by other conditions of the treaty, surrendered into the hands of Great Britain the power of crippling and crushing the whole scheme of her commerce, of chastising her presumption, and of reducing her to her former state of abject dependence, whenever the interest, the prejudices, or the animosity of the trading part of this community should countenance the measure. Mr. Sheridan urged this in other points of view, and declared, that if he were a person of consideration in Ireland, so far from encouraging the people there to struggle for the British market, he should think it his duty, and what he owed to the interests of his countrymen, to call loudly to the whole land, to turn away their eyes and thoughts from that one object, to attempt no race or contest with the British manufacturer—to shun, as the greatest evil, the jealousies, heart-burnings, and destructive ill-will, which would necessarily breed on such a competition, circumstanced so peculiarly with respect to burdens as Great Britain was, and biassed by rooted habits of thinking upon this particular point; but to endeavor to increase, by fair and gentle means, the home consumption of the produce of their own industry, and by systematic and vigo-

rous enterprise, to aim at a successful intercourse with every foreign port; there, if they met the British merchant, it would be a liberal emulation; there he could have no innovation or unfairness to complain of; and there, even if successfully rivalled, he would be conscious that the increasing wealth of Ireland, from such a source, might, with truth, be stated to be a fund wherein the general commerce of England would assuredly find its compensation. Thus might Ireland be addressed under her present circumstances; but let the settlement now proposed be once established, what would be the answer? Would not the Irish merchant and manufacturer reply—“What you advise us to, is unreasonable and preposterous;—we have bound ourselves for ever to the monopolies of Great Britain in the East and in the West; we receive the commodities of both at her will, at her prices, and at her duties; we are crippled in our intercourse with America, holding a precarious and restrained trade with those sovereign states as if they were still British colonies: our dreams of being the depôt and emporium for the foreign countries of Europe are, of consequence become visionary and ridiculous; we have violated the principles of our constitution, by giving a perpetual aid to a military force at the will of the executive magistrate; we have for ever surrendered our right of external legislation into the hands of the British parliament; for all this, the British market is our compensation; upon that we are compelled to fasten our minds; to that we must cling, that we must obtain, by every possible exertion of every kind; and if Great Britain suffers by it, the mischief is of her own seeking, and the restrictions which force us to this contest, is of her own imposing.” These would be the happy fruits of a plan, whose boasted object was to cement the union of the two countries, and connect them by bonds of eternal amity, and reciprocal affection!

After enlarging on this, Mr. Sheridan concluded

with pressing on the attention of the house the propositions as they then stood, completely changed in spirit, principle, and regulation; and begging them to consider them in their true light, as new proposals from the British parliament,—those made by the Irish parliament being in fact rejected; and to decide, whether they were such as human reason could suppose the Irish parliament, weighing what they are to renounce, and what they are to acquire, could accept, if fair time was given them to argue and deliberate; or if, by surprise and management, they were hurried through that parliament, at a season of thin attendance and relaxed attention, whether the most fatal misunderstandings might not be apprehended, from the country's afterwards discovering the delusion which had been practised upon them, and the arts and fallacies which had obtained the irrevocable surrender of their dearest rights. The resolution in debate, was declared to be the essence of this new system; negative that, and the plan fell to the ground; if it passed that day, a deep wound would instantly be given to the confidence of Ireland in Great Britain; if adopted rashly by the Irish parliament, the decisive blow would be struck, and affection and good faith between the two countries be banished for ever.

Mr. Pitt, in reply, observed—"If a chain of recent events, and the whole tenor of the conduct that had been adopted by persons of a certain description, had not exhausted and anticipated his surprise at any thing that could come from them, he could scarcely believe his senses, when he beheld a gentleman (Mr. Sheridan) who for many weeks had concealed his intentions so effectually, as to leave it a doubt whether he was friendly or hostile to the arrangement now depending, stand forth the avowed enemy of a part of the system which was necessarily connected with the whole, and take up a ground of opposition the most dangerous and inflammatory that could possibly suggest itself. But it was not to be wondered at, that the conduct of the honorable gentleman should be so inconsistent, when it was remembered how inconsistent all the measures of the party, of which he was the mouth-piece, were; and how inconsistent the persons who composed that party were with one another."—Lord North, Mr. Fox, and Mr. Sheridan, rose together instantly as Mr. Pitt sat

down; the two former gave way, as Mr. Sheridan had been so particularly pointed at in Mr. Pitt's speech.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he was confident that the candor and liberality of the house would indulge him with a few minutes attention (though he had just taken up so large a portion of their time) to enable him to repel the grossest perversion, not of words merely, but of conduct and motives, which the most presumptuous adept at misrepresentation had ever attempted to maintain, in defiance of truth and decency. The right hon. gentleman had charged him, in the most acrimonious language of reproof, with inconsistency of conduct. He was accused of not having appeared to hold one uniform opinion upon the subject of the Irish propositions—a curious charge, and curiously supported; for the very words of the right honorable gentleman's accusation accounted for, and justified the contradictions he complained of.—It was, because every day had brought forth new opinions—it was, because every time the committee met, the tone had been changed, and the ground had been shifted—that it had become utterly impossible for any person either to support or oppose his system upon the same principle, or with the same arguments, for two days together. But it was not very surprising that the right honorable gentleman, who had forgotten every ground which, at the commencement, he professed to act upon, should not very accurately remember the line of conduct pursued by others—nothing but this complete oblivion of himself, and what he had done in this business, could have betrayed him into the rashness of accusing gentlemen on that side of the house of acting a double game? Did he complain of a double game?—he, through whose whole conduct in this business had not observed one direct proceeding,—not one straight-forward step. The whole negotiation, from the first hour, had been carved, twisted, and circuitous—a plan, opened with duplicity, and explained with equivocation. The gross and glaring contradictions between the right honorable gen-

tleman's first statement and reasoning upon this business in England, and Mr. Orde's in Ireland, undoubtedly had no resemblance to a double game; there had been no double game in the committee of privy council, carrying on a mock investigation for His Majesty's information, after His Majesty had received an address of thanks for having adopted the measure; and, above all, no double game had been practised with the manufacturers; but all their misapprehensions had been owing to accident, or their own dulness! Whilst such things were in the recollection of the house, the right honorable gentleman must not expect to have his loose and unfounded charges pass unreplied to, however boldly urged with lofty tones and clamorous declamation. For his part, he defied the right honorable gentleman to tax him with any one inconsistency upon this subject. He was the mouth-piece of no party, as the right honorable gentleman had been pleased to style him, nor was he the tool of any party. He had as strong party feelings as any man; but he had those feelings, because those he was attached to, neither expected from him servility of judgment, nor pliancy of principle. The right honorable gentleman, perhaps, knew himself too well, what it was to be only the channel of conveying other people's sentiments and decrees—to be the eloquent mouth employed to promulgate schemes, not bred in his own judgment, nor approved by his own heart. This, he solemnly believed, was the right honorable gentleman's case at present. He was convinced, in his own mind, that that part of the plan which was to entrap Ireland into a surrender of her constitution, was no original wish of that right honorable gentleman's, but had been put upon him since, by those who will some day make still harder conditions with him, for the continuance of their countenance and support.

Mr. Sheridan then recapitulated his own conduct throughout the discussion; stating, that soon after the opening of the proposed arrangement, he had said in

debate in that house, that he should differ upon this subject, he feared, with those whom he had always acted with; that he had solicited no petition, nor knew even of that from Stafford till the day he had presented it; but that on the day Mr. Pitt brought forward his sixteen new propositions, so far from appearing to approve of them, he had called to the right honorable gentleman to read a second time this particular proposition, and had declared, in speaking to an amendment, he moved before the house rose that night, that the fourth resolution struck him as an absolute resumption of the right of external legislation over Ireland. The right honorable gentleman brought an amendment to this resolution the next time the committee sat, and quoted what he called his (Mr. Sheridan's) misconception as a reason. Mr. Sheridan had then replied, that the amendment had removed no part of his objection.—He had since spoken and divided against this resolution in the committee.

With regard to other particulars in this arrangement, he had voted, in many instances, with the minister, and against his right honorable friend and the noble lord; and he had suggested some amendments which had been adopted, and which certainly tended to smooth the reception of the propositions in Ireland. He left the house to judge, whether there was any thing either inflammatory or inconsistent in this conduct. But his opinion upon the whole of the plan, as it was completed, he had delivered that day, and that opinion he would maintain.

The house proceeded at one o'clock, and continued till past four, to make amendments, several of which were offered by Mr. Eden; and being admitted to be necessary, accepted. Mr. Fox moved afterwards to equalize the duties on the import of raw materials into the two kingdoms; and also on the export of manufactures to foreign ports; and also to adopt mutually all prohibitions on foreign manufactures. This clause was negatived. The house, at the conclusion, resolved, "That the resolutions be communicated to the lords, and their concurrence desired thereto."

JULY 8.

Mr. SHERIDAN desired to know from ministers, whether the bill for preventing the exportation of manufactures, and materials for the manufacture of iron beyond seas, extended to Ireland? And not receiving a satisfactory answer, he moved that the bill be printed. After some debate, he withdrew his motion.

FEBRUARY 8, 1786.

ARMY ESTIMATES.

The order of the day was read, for the house "to resolve itself into a committee of ways and means;" and, after agreeing to certain resolutions proposed, a long and uninterrupted pause ensued.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that he concluded the house were now waiting, in silent suspense, for the appearance of the Secretary at War, with his proposal of a vote in favor of the army estimates. But surely the house would act with more propriety if, instead of listening at so early a period to the discussion of this important subject, they were to adjourn immediately, and thus allow themselves more time for the investigation.

The Secretary at War now entered, and moved, "That the house should resolve itself into a committee of supply, for the purpose of taking the army estimates into consideration." Mr. Minchin moved, "that the house should now adjourn."

Mr. Sheridan said, that he also must resist the motion for the Speaker's leaving the chair; yet, upon an important principle, in some measure dissimilar from that of his honorable friend; and for the sake of preserving a strict and invariable adherence to the established rules and forms of proceeding in that house, on the present occasion, he felt it right to urge the necessity of preserving such an adherence; and, therefore, must beg leave to remind the right honorable gentleman in the chair,

that he rested on his authority for the validity and justness of his argument as applicable to the present instance. It had been the well-known and established rule of proceeding with the army estimates, to have them laid upon the table eight days prior to any motions being made for referring them to the consideration of a committee. This rule had, he believed, been invariably adhered to in every former instance ; but in the present the estimates had not been upon the table more than five days, and now it was attempted to go into a committee for the purpose of voting them ; although at the time they had been presented, when Wednesday was nominated, as the day on which they should be taken into consideration, they had heard from the first authority in that house, that the practise had been, in all preceding times, not to move for their being referred to the committee of supply, until they had been upon the table eight days. With such indecency did the administration fly in the face of the chair ; and fatal would prove the consequences if a bad precedent were once suffered to be established. He did not mean to insinuate that any improper intention operated upon the right honorable gentleman at the head of the War Office, in thus urging the house to break through their established rules ; but if he was to be indulged in every eccentric flight of genius that he might choose to take, there was no knowing into what strange extravagancies he might not lead them. For his part, he wondered from whom he had learnt the idea of breaking through the established rules and forms of the house ; his predecessors in office had been content to adhere invariably to those rules, and in so doing they had acted wisely. If the rule was once broken through, it might be abolished altogether. If it was right to vote the army estimates after they had been upon the table only five days, why not vote them after being there only four, three, or two days ? or why not bring them down,

present them, and call upon the house to vote them the next day, or the very day on which they were presented? The same reason which would justify the violation of the rule in one instance, would justify it in all. Besides, in all former sessions, the constant usage had been to vote the navy before the army estimates; and, as the strength of our marine was to guide what sort of an army might be necessary, the vote of the navy ought always to precede the vote of the army. This infringement of the usual practise was highly reprehensible; and though he could not agree that it was not improper to vote the army before the militia, or think that there required any argument whatever to prove the extreme impropriety of going into a committee, besides that very serious one which he had already urged, the absolute necessity of a strict adherence to the established rules and forms of proceeding in that house; yet, certainly the manner in which the right honorable gentleman had expressed himself on the subject of the militia, afforded strong ground of objection to voting the army estimates at present. The right honorable gentleman had contended that an honorable and respectable friend of his ought not to shrink from his intention of bringing in the bill for regulating the militia; because he, a single individual in that house, had declared he had not made up his mind to one particular point. For his part, he was of the same opinion; and he hoped, notwithstanding what had passed, that the worthy and respectable member would bring in his bill. And, surely, the public were already under infinite obligations to him for what he had done, and for his introducing the bill, even if it were to fail, from that part of it being objected to and overcome, that enacted the measure, which the honorable gentleman, and those who had with him taken the trouble of digesting the system (and who were consequently the best able to judge of every part of it), deemed the most essential point

of all, would be attended with this good consequence, that it would not only bring the subject fairly under discussion, but open the eyes of the public, and convince them who were, and who were not, the friends of the militia; and whether there was, or was not, any design to annihilate the institution. With regard to the right honorable gentleman's calling himself, as he had thought proper to do, in respect to the militia, a single individual, it might fairly be observed, that the right honorable gentleman passed under various characters in that house; at one time he called himself a member of administration, at another the minister, then again the minister of the crown; nay, he had even once assumed the self-created character of representative of the representatives of the people, and sent his own will in a dictatorial manner to the Irish parliament, instead of the resolutions of that house. But when the fit of humility was on him, he bent to the more submissive character of a simple individual. It was not a little remarkable that the effect and success of his measures for the most part, depended on the character which he thought fit to assume. When the right honorable gentleman chose to stand up as a single individual, he generally failed of achieving his purpose. On the grand question of reform in the representation of the people in parliament, the right honorable gentleman professed he was acting as a single individual, and there he did not succeed. In this scrutiny, in like manner, acting as a single individual, he failed; and had he been no more than a single individual in the case of his India bill, he verily believed the right honorable gentleman would have failed likewise. He confidently hoped that the militia bill, if brought in and gone on with, would succeed, as the right honorable gentleman chose, on the present occasion, to call himself a single individual, however much the gentlemen who had waited upon him respecting the militia, might have found him the

minister at his house in Downing-street. On the whole, it appeared that the house could not immediately go into a committee upon the army estimates, without violating an established practise, and thereby introducing a precedent which might lead to most mischievous and alarming consequences. He felt it difficult to conclude without observing, that the half-stifled laughter with which the minister and his friends met some of his remarks, were indecently misapplied, on a subject of such particular importance.

The Secretary at War said he flattered himself that the defence of his own conduct would rest firmly upon a plain statement of facts; and, therefore, he should leave it to the house to judge from them, and draw the natural conclusions. There was not in that house, he believed, a member who had shewn more respect and reverence to their forms of proceedings than he had uniformly done for the thirty years, during which he had sat in parliament; and he trusted that he had not in the present instance acted so as to violate any one of them. The papers had now been seven days on the table. (Mr. Sheridan cried out No, no! only five.) The Secretary at War added, that he should persist in his assertion; they were presented on the preceding Thursday, and he should contend, that Thursday was one day, Friday two, Saturday three, Sunday four, (the opposite side of the house laughed), Monday five, Tuesday six, and Wednesday seven; that was a complete week, for he knew of no rule that the whole of the seven should be sitting days. Saturdays and Sundays would serve as well for the inspection of papers as any other days; and, therefore, let the house judge whether the papers had not been before them a full week; and whether he was chargeable with any attempt either to proceed precipitately, or to violate any established form of proceeding. Indeed, he should have imagined, that the honorable gentleman who had just sat down, knew his character as a member of parliament too well to have supposed him capable of such a design; and as to eccentric flights of genius, he could only say, he was at that moment (tortured by the gout) less qualified than ever to attempt flights even at any other time, if he had been so inclined. As a proof that his arguments were far from inconclusive, he begged leave to remind the house, that when he gave notice of the day on which he should move to refer the estimates to the committee of supply, a noble Earl (Surrey) expressed his satisfaction that the time of investigation was so little distant.

Mr. Sheridan answered, that the right honorable gentleman had contented himself with attempting to prove that the papers had been upon the table a

week or seven days; but even if that could be made out (which he must beg leave to deny), this was not meeting his argument; which was, that the papers had not been on the table the usual time, and in that argument he had been supported by the first authority in that house. When he alluded to the eccentric flights of the right honorable gentleman, he certainly did not mean to insinuate, that the right honorable gentleman had taken a flight of such altitude as that of a right honorable friend of his (Colonel Fitzpatrick) during the course of the preceding year.

The house afterwards resolved itself into a committee, Mr. Minchin's amendment being first given up; and certain resolutions were moved and voted, and ordered to be reported, on Tuesday the 10th.

FEBRUARY 10.

ARMY ESTIMATES.

A motion was made for the second reading of the report from the committee of supply, of the vote of the army. Mr. Steele observed, that he believed no person would consider he was hostile to the motion; and that his only reason for rising was to rescue his right honorable friend (Mr. Pitt) from the imputation thrown out upon him on the preceding Wednesday, that he despised and trampled upon the orders and forms of the house, in proposing to have the army estimates voted before they had lain a week upon the table. A noble lord (North), whose opinion always carried with it great weight, had said that the week should be taken exclusive of the day on which the estimate was produced. But having since looked into the Journals, he found, that the precedent quoted on Wednesday last by an honorable friend (Mr. Rose), was not the only one which might have been produced; it was not, what had been called, "a single swallow; for he could follow it up with a whole flight of swallows, and shew that, during a period of twenty years, there were four or five precedents where the army had been voted precisely within the same distance of time, after the presenting of the estimate, which had elapsed this year; and seven, where it had been voted within a much shorter distance; as he had committed these precedents to writing, he should beg leave to read them; and, then, it would appear that—

Mr. SHERIDAN declared, that he must take the liberty immediately to interrupt the honorable mem-

ber, because he had violated order in speaking from the question; which was, for the second reading of the report; and in alluding to a former debate. His precedents would have been very proper on Wednesday, had he been apprized on that day of their existence. They would have been properly urged on that day to prove, that there was no deviation from the practise of the house. But, surely, they came too late *now*, to prove that the right honorable gentleman acted right on Wednesday last, when, in defiance of the opinion of the chair, and when he did not know that these precedents had ever existed, he moved to have the army estimate voted. The gentlemen on the other side, he supposed, had enjoyed the good fortune to be assisted since Wednesday by an industrious searcher (Mr. Eden) of the Journals, whom he had seen on the first day of the session in a new place in that house, but whom he had not seen since;—who divided his principles and affection between both sides, giving his support to the one, and his good wishes to the other. The precedents, however, availed but little; for, it had not been denied, but that occasions might occur, which would warrant a departure from the general practise; but when it was urged that the reason of such departure ought to be stated and made appear, which no one had attempted on Wednesday last, then it was that numbers of his honorable friends, as controversialists, enjoyed the pleasure of finding themselves under the crowded standard of the chair, in feeble opposition to which but one solitary precedent had arisen.

The resolutions were read a second time, and agreed to.

ESTIMATE OF THE EXPENSE OF ERECTING FORTIFICATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION AND SECURITY OF THE DOCK-YARDS.

The first object of importance that engaged the attention of parliament in the present session, was a measure which originated with the Duke of Richmond, the Master-General of the Ordnance. It

was a plan for fortifying the dock-yards at Portsmouth and Plymouth. The house of commons had, in the preceding session, expressed their unwillingness to apply any part of the public money for this purpose, before they were made acquainted with the opinions of such personages as were best able to decide concerning the utility and propriety of such a measure. In consequence of this intimation a Board of Military and Naval Officers was appointed by the king, with the Master-General of the Ordnance as their president; and the proposed plan of fortifications was referred to them for their opinions and advice. After they had investigated the subjects, and had made their report thereon, the plans recommended were laid before the Board of Engineers to make an estimate of the expenses necessary to carry them into execution. This estimate, which amounted to no less a sum than 760,097l, Mr. Pitt laid before the house this day; and it was originally intended by him, that it should be debated and decided upon, together with the ordnance estimates, as a mere collateral question. Lieut.-Gen. Burgoyne, who was one of the board of officers that made the report, expressed his desire, that before the business was further proceeded upon, so much both of the report itself, and of the instructions upon which it was founded, as could be made public with safety to the state, should be laid upon the table of the house. The reason alleged by him was, that the house might otherwise unwarily be led to think that the report sanctioned the plan of fortifications proposed more than it really did.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that unless the house were to be shewn such parts of the report of the board of inspection as called for their discussion, they were exactly in the same situation in which they stood before that board was appointed; and instead of having the whole of the question fully before them as the right honorable gentleman had said they would have it, viz. not on the assertion of an individual, of a singular minister, nor of any man in office; but on the authority of a board consisting of naval and military officers of known character, experience and integrity; they would have nothing but the bare assertion of the minister, as a guidance for their judgment. For his own part he would not entertain a doubt but that the right honorable gentleman meant to be accurate in the statement which he had just made, as the statement of those outlines of the report in question; and that he had delivered what he himself conceived to be a correct statement of those out-

lines. But the house had heard that statement contradicted by the honorable general behind him, who had himself been a member of that board. In order, therefore, to enable the house to judge fairly between the right honorable gentleman and the honorable general, they ought to see such parts of the report at least as might be submitted to their perusal with safety to the state.

FEBRUARY 16.

MR. SHERIDAN'S MOTION, THAT MR. JOSEPH PEARSON BE CALLED IN AND EXAMINED, IN RELATION TO DELIVERING BALLOT LISTS.

Mr. SHERIDAN begged leave to assure the house, that it was very far from his intention to have trespassed upon their patience some remarks, which, now, he deemed it necessary to make, if, on the preceding day, some honorable gentleman, in the service of administration, had not insinuated, with an air of triumph over him for his supposed defection, that, with reproachful inconsistency, he had first stated a motion to the house, and then suddenly deserted it, without having previously pursued it to any opening whatever. If gentlemen would please to honor him, upon the present occasion, with their attention, he felt himself persuaded that he should totally exonerate himself from all charges of inconsistency. When, upon the Wednesday he came down to the house, he perceived, and not without astonishment, the door-keeper putting into the hands of every member a paper, containing a written list of the names of gentlemen, by way of a balloting list; and having the strongest grounds for belief that these papers were prepared at the Treasury, and that it was by their direction the door-keeper delivered them; and feeling that such conduct was a direct and scandalous attack upon the privileges of that house; and conceiving,

likewise, that it was most shamefully indecent on the part of administration, and that it flatly contradicted the affectation of impartiality with which the bill was fraught, with respect to the mode of constituting the court of judicature; he had risen and stated his intention of proving the fact, by moving, "that the door-keeper be called to the bar of the house," which motion he was proceeding to ground upon argument, when he had been called down from the chair, (very properly called down, he was ready to admit, on the part of the Speaker, who had been reminded that two hundred members were present, and desired to lock the door and proceed to the ballot, in compliance with the act of parliament, which authorised the institution of the Court of Judicature.) This having proved the case, and the ballot having been actually proceeded upon, was there any inconsistency in his not afterwards attempting to make his motion? One reason upon which he meant to have rested it, and one object to which he intended to have pointed it, tended to shew the necessity and propriety of postponing the ballot to another day. Mr. Sheridan strenuously insisted, that it would have been most absurd in him to have attempted to have made his motion, when so essential an end aimed at by it as getting the ballot postponed was determined, and over, by the ballot's having taken place. That was an explanation of his conduct of the preceding day; and he left it to the house to decide, whether it was at all inconsistent or contradictory. He complained of the ministers having taken an unfair advantage of the letter of the act of parliament, in calling to the Speaker to shut the doors when he did. He admitted that, according to the letter of the act, such conduct was warranted; but under such a strict enforcement of the letter of the act, the minister might, when the house were in a division, and one hundred members (those in the opposition) out in the lobby, and two hundred (all the friends of the

minister) within the house, call to the chair to lock the doors, and proceed to ballot with a complete certainty of carrying the election his own way.

What could be more gross and preposterous than the minister's conduct the preceding day, when he prevented him from opening his motion, by calling to the chair to have the doors shut while he was on his legs? What he meant now to move, would be that part of his yesterday's purpose, which might be fully accomplished, and this was, "That the door-keeper be called to the bar of the house," there to state from whom he received the written lists, and by whose authority he delivered them to the members as they entered. The fact was an infringement of the privileges of the house, and an indecent and direct attempt to influence their members in their capacity of electors of the new Court of Judicature by treasury interference. He flattered himself that he should not again hear the ridiculous argument of the preceding day, that there was no compulsion used, and that the papers left the minds of the members as free and unbiassed as they were before they saw them. (Mr. Pitt said, across the house, so they did.) Mr. Sheridan declared his extreme surprise at the right honorable gentleman's still contending for so palpable an absurdity; he said, he had imagined even the shortest time for recollection would have convinced the right honorable gentleman that the position was truly ridiculous; and that, although Mr. Pearson had not taken the members individually by the shoulders, and forced them by manual strength to ballot for the list he had put into their possession, yet, certainly by thrusting the treasury list into their hands, he had not left their minds as completely free and uninfluenced as they had been before. The bill affected great impartiality on the part of the minister; and it had been argued at the time the bill was in progress, that it was intended that the minister for the time-being should not interfere in the election of the new

Court of Judicature in any way whatsoever. How could this be reconciled to the conduct adopted? A conduct at once so indecent and so degrading to them, that if the right honorable gentleman dared rise and avow, that the lists were prepared by his orders, and delivered by his authority, he would pledge himself to move the severest censure of that house upon the right honorable gentleman; and indeed, it was the duty of the house to institute an inquiry, in order to ascertain what he had stated as matter highly culpable on the part of the treasury; and the house could take no means so effectual of doing that, as ordering their door-keeper to the bar. He desired not to be misunderstood as meaning to cast any sort of slur on the characters whose names were in the written lists; more respectable characters he knew not; and so far was he from wishing it to be conceived that he intended to throw any imputation upon them, he was not without hopes, that they would feel that he was combating *their* cause, and would all vote with him. With these impressions, he trusted that he could *successfully* move, "That Mr. Joseph Pearson, door-keeper, be now called in and examined in relation to the said complaint."

Mr. Pitt replied.

Mr. Sheridan, censuring the mis-statements of his argument, complained of the right honorable gentleman's having pointed him out as a person apt to treat that house with insult and contempt. Nothing, he added, could be farther from his intention; and as he had not the great abilities, the power, the influence of office, nor the other advantages that right honorable gentleman possessed, to recommend him to the good opinion of the house, the right honorable gentleman, he hoped, would not take from him his only possession, a most sincere respect for the house and all its members. Mr. Sheridan added, that he differed in one point from

his right honorable friend near him ; he meant to have balloted, though an enemy to the bill, but he had been prevented by accident.

The question being put, the house divided ; ayes 38 ; noes 138.

FORTIFICATIONS FOR PROTECTION OF DOCK-YARDS.

Mr. Sheridan expressed his wish that the motion concerning the proceedings, respecting the proposed plan of fortifying the dock-yards, should not occasion much debate, or even meet with resistance. But, previous to making it, he should imagine it would be right to call gentlemen's attention back to the situation in which the house stood at that moment, with respect to the subject. They would please to recollect that the minister having given them to understand that, previous to their being called upon to vote, that the 50,000*l.* granted towards fortifications to be erected for the defence of the dock-yards in 1784, should be so applied, the whole matter should be referred to a board of general officers, naval as well as military, to enquire into the nature of the plan proposed, the possibility of doing without it, the necessity for having it, the wisdom and policy of adopting it, and the expense which it would ultimately incur. He should also beg leave to remind the house of the turn of the argument of the right honorable gentleman, on the preceding Friday, when he formally announced his expectation, that when the ordnance estimates were voted this session, the application of 50,000*l.* in hand would be desired. At that time the right honorable gentleman had said, that the house would not now have the bare word of an individual, or of any minister, to rely on ; but the report and unanimous opinion of a board of the most respectable nature ever instituted, a board composed of the first characters in the naval and military line now in being. What then (added Mr. Sheridan) was his

astonishment, and what must have been the astonishment of the house, to find an honorable general, a member of that board, rise in his place, and flatly contradict the right honorable gentleman, by denying that the result of the opinions of that board had been such as the right honorable gentleman had described, or that those opinions warranted any such declaration as he had advanced. The right honorable gentleman had risen a second time, and put the matter at issue between him and the honorable general, challenging the judgment of the house, and calling upon them to decide who was right and who wrong in his assertion? Where was the possibility of the house judging without either evidence or means of directing their determination? Assertion stood against assertion; and they, altogether uninformed as to the real merits of the fact at issue, and perfectly in the dark, were desired to decide? This was so obviously absurd, that he should have imagined, when the right honorable gentleman put the matter at issue, he would, himself, have furnished those who were called upon to give judgment, with the means of forming their opinion. As he had not proceeded thus far, he meant to do it by his motion of that day; but, concluding that a great deal of matter improper to be laid before the house, might be contained in the detail of the report of the board of naval and military officers, he had cautiously forbore to make his motion too extensive; and had worded it so as to empower ministers to lay such parts only of what papers the motion called for, before the house, as might be placed upon the table with the greatest safety to the state. If, however, his motion, in its present form, was to be found objectionable, and less objectionable words could be suggested, he would readily adopt them; and if the papers were furnished, and bore out the right honorable gentleman in his assertion, he would for one, abandon all idea of opposing the proposal to suffer the money to be applied to fortifications.

In conclusion, Mr. Sheridan moved for a copy of the appointment of the board of naval and military officers, of such parts of their instructions, and of their report, as His Majesty's discretion might deem proper to be made public with perfect consistency to the safety of the state.

As the board in question had been constituted by circular letters from the king, without any official commission or appointment, Mr. Pitt substituted another motion, the same in effect as the foregoing, but more conformable to the fact, which passed unanimously.

FEBRUARY 27.

FORTIFICATIONS FOR PROTECTION OF DOCK-YARDS.

The papers moved for on the 16th being laid before the house, Mr. Pitt introduced the measures in the form of a general resolution, to the following effect:—"That it appears to this house, that to provide effectually for securing His Majesty's dock-yard at Portsmouth and Plymouth, by a permanent system of fortification, founded on the most economical principles, and requiring the smallest number of troops possible to answer the purpose of such security, is an essential object for the safety of the state, internally connected with the general defence of the kingdom, and necessary for enabling the fleet to act with full vigour and effect for the protection of commerce, the support of our distant possessions, and the prosecution of offensive operations, in any war in which the nation may hereafter be engaged." In opposition to the measure, it was moved as an amendment by Mr. Bastard, to leave out of the resolution all the words from the word "house," to the end of the question, and to insert "that fortifications on so extensive a plan as proposed by the Board are inexpedient."

Mr. SHERIDAN declared, that he gave the noble viscount full credit for the principles he had professed with respect to the constitution; and that he did sincerely believe that the noble viscount would not vote for the measure then under discussion; but, upon a supposition, that its tendency was rather to diminish than augment the military power of the crown. Upon this ground, therefore, he would meet him; and he was sanguine enough to believe, that the noble viscount might be induced to alter the

opinion which he had declared, unless indeed he was restrained from exercising his free judgment upon the subject; an apprehension which a late speech of his had suggested, a speech in which the noble viscount had expressed himself so full of dread and horror, at the means by which a Tory foe, in another place, had, both by sap and storm, assailed those constitutional bulwarks which the noble viscount had so zealously endeavoured to erect for the protection of our decayed election rights, that it was almost reasonable to presume that the noble viscount might have entered into a serious compact with a noble duke, his former ally, on this subject, for reciprocal assistance on their two favourite objects; by which the noble viscount was peremptorily to support the plan of fortifying the dock-yards in that house, or the noble duke would no longer engage to assist him in fortifying the constitution in the other. But what was the noble viscount's argument? He had rested the matter entirely upon the ground taken by his right honorable friend (Mr. Pitt) that the pursuing this system of fortification would actually diminish the standing army in this country; and that the number of troops being so diminished, there would be proportionably less cause for that constitutional jealousy, with which all parties agreed it was our duty to regard the increasing military power of the crown. That this system of defence by fortifications, could, under any circumstances, have the effect of reducing the standing army, he must beg leave utterly to deny. Some plausible arguments indeed had been adduced in support of this notion, which, however, when sifted, would be found fallacious and contradictory. For the present, however, he would wave that point, and admit implicitly, that the standing army of the country would be reduced by the measure proposed, precisely in the proportion stated by the noble viscount; it then, however, remained to be proved, that, giving the noble viscount his premises, he

was right in his conclusion. When we talked of a constitutional jealousy of the military power of the crown, what was the real object to which we pointed our suspicion? What was the datum, as the fashionable phrase was, upon which they proceeded? What! but that it was in the nature of kings to love power, and in the constitution of armies to obey kings. This, doubtless, was most delicate ground to touch upon; but the circumstances of the present question called for plain dealing; and for his part he could not be suspected, even in the smallest degree, of alluding either to the present monarch upon the throne, or to the army under his command. He agreed most sincerely to the distinctions taken with respect to both, by a worthy baronet who had spoken before him; but at the same time it must be admitted, that whenever we spoke of a constitutional jealousy of the army, it was upon a supposition, that the unhappy time might come, when a prince, misled by evil counsellors, and against the suggestions of his own gracious temper, of course might cherish the disastrous notion, that he could become greater by making his subjects less, and that an army might be found so forgetful of their duty as citizens, so warped by feelings of false honour, or so degraded by habits of implicit obedience, as to support their military head in an attempt upon the rights and liberties of their country! The possible existence of this case, and the probable coincidence of these circumstances, was that to which every gentleman's mind must point, when he admitted an argument upon the subject; otherwise we burlesqued and derided the wisdom of our ancestors, in their provisions of the Bill of Rights; and made a mere mockery of the salutary and sacred reserve with which, for a short and limited period, we annually entrusted the executive magistrate with the necessary defence of the country. This plain statement being really the case, to what, in such a crisis, were we to look? Were our apprehensions only to be directed to the length of the muster-roll

of men in the King's pay? Were we to calculate only the number of soldiers whom he could encamp at Hounslow, or the force of the detachment which he might spare to surround the lobby of the house of commons? No; the jet and substance of the question lay briefly here. In which of the two situations now argued upon, would the King and his evil advisers find themselves in a state of the greatest military force and preparation, and most likely to command and to receive a military support? In this point of view, would it be argued, that these fortresses, which were to become capable of resisting the siege of a foreign enemy landed in force, would serve as a sufficient strength in the hands of the crown, when the enemy was his people? Would no stress be given to the great and important distinction, already ably urged, between troops elected and separated from their fellow-citizens in garrisons and forts, and men living scattered and entangled in all the common duties and connections of their countrymen? Was this an argument of no weight when applied to the militia, who were to form a part of these garrisons? or would it, even for a moment, be pretended, that men under such circumstances, and in such disciplined habits, were not a thousand times more likely to despise the breath of parliament, and to lend themselves to the active purposes of tyranny and ambition, than the loose and unconnected bodies which exist even with jealousy under the present system? It was necessary to press the distinction; the fact was, that these strong military holds, if maintained as they must be in peace, by full and disciplined garrisons; if well provided, and calculated to stand regular sieges, as the present plan professed; and if extended to all the objects to which the system must inevitably lead, whether they were to be considered as inducements to tempt a weak prince to evil views, or as engines of power, in case of an actual rupture; would, in truth, promise tenfold the means of curbing and subduing the country,

than could be stated to arise even from doubling the present military establishment; with this extraordinary aggravation attending the folly of consenting to such a system, that those very naval stores and magazines, the seed and sources of our future navy, the effectual preservation of which was the pretence for these unassailable fortresses, would, in that case, become a pledge and hostage in the hands of the crown, which, in a country circumstanced as this was, must insure an unconditional submission to the most extravagant claims which despotism could dictate.

What could possibly prove more fallacious than holding out expectations, that a system of defence by fortifications could, in fact, end in a retrenchment of the standing army! The first fallacy in this argument stood forward in the supposition that the system of defence by fortifications was necessarily to stop, when Portsmouth and Plymouth should become secured; and that the reasoning upon which the extensive works for those places were justified, would not apply to any other parts of the kingdom, however their importance called for defence, or their situation exposed them to attack. The shortest method of refuting this idea, was simply to suppose the same board of officers, acting under the same instructions, and deliberating under the same data, going a circuit round the coast of the kingdom, and directed to report upon the various places in their progress; and let any person fairly consider the suppositions under which they make their present report, and then hesitate to confess, that they must, of necessity, recommend a similar plan of defence proportioned to the importance of every place to which their attention was directed. It was superfluous to dwell upon the circumstances which no longer permitted us to consider Holland, in future, otherwise than as a province of France; or which made it equally reasonable to look with an eye of apprehension to the neigh-

bouring coast belonging to the Emperor; because, the fact was evident that, in the case of this country being engaged in a war against a powerful confederacy (upon the supposition of which alone the present scheme was recommended and justified) every motive of prudence must compel us to direct an attention as vigorous and vigilant to the eastern as to the southern coast of this country. It was not possible for the house to remain at a loss to discover various places which, with Chatham and Sheerness (where most extensive lines had actually been begun under the auspices of the noble Duke) must necessarily be provided for in the new system of protection; and for his own part, indeed, he could wish, that any person would compute the stationary defence necessary for such places, in addition to the twenty-two thousand men demanded for Portsmouth and Plymouth; and allow likewise for any moving force in the country, and then decide what chance there was that this prolific system would terminate in a reduction of the standing army!

Concerning the probability of our being able to furnish men for the constant maintenance of these garrisons, he felt it requisite to observe, that the argument had been, not a reference to our present peace establishment, but to the extent of the service during the most extravagant periods of the last war; which, in other words, was to hold out a notion that we might speedily again look to a time when we should become able to expend, for the purpose of war, fifteen millions of money in the course of a single year!—at the very moment when the right honorable gentleman was holding out the reduction of our debt by a few hundred thousand pounds, as the triumph of his administration, and the cornerstone of that pillar upon which his fame was to become emblazoned! But, even supposing this to be possible, and considering the reference to our establishment in the last war as just, the right honorable gentleman had taken an unfair advantage of the ar-

gument ; for when he stated the numerous armies which we had upon the continent of America, as resources from which we were in future to garrison these forts, and increase our home defence, he ought also to have taken into his account the enormous floating establishment attendant upon those armies ; and which, being converted into an efficient naval defence at home, would make both his fortifications and his garrisons unnecessary.

To the attack which the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had chosen to make upon the late administration, he should beg leave to answer that, in whatever point of view he was that day to regard the right honorable gentleman, whether as that glorious orb which an honorable gentleman (Mr. Luttrell) had described him to be, whose influence and power was more than to compensate to the nation for the loss of an hemisphere ; or whether his lustre was calculated rather to dazzle and surprise, than to cherish and invigorate ; whether he merited the less complimentary language of his right honorable friend (Colonel Barrè) who observed, that his conscience had been surprised in this business ; or whether he had capitulated upon regular approaches ; whether he had been successful in repelling the insinuation of another gentleman, that he was not in earnest in this cause, by the vehemence of his manner, or had confirmed it by the weakness of his argument ; whether the right honorable gentleman most deserved the praises or reproaches which he had received, he would not embarrass himself by pretending to determine ; but only observe, that one part of his conduct had most astonishingly escaped the panegyric of his friends—he meant the spirit and enterprise with which, taking his hint probably from the subject in debate, he had endeavoured to carry the war into the enemy's country, and pursue measures of offence and attack ; whilst every pass at home was left unfortified and defenceless.

For what was the ground of this strenuous charge? The late administration (as the right honorable gentleman asserted) had submitted part of this very plan to the judgment of parliament, but at the desire of the house, withdrew that part for reconsideration; and now, if, upon reconsideration, they had in any respect altered their opinion, it was the grossest inconsistency of conduct, and dereliction of principle!—an extraordinary charge, and particularly so from the gentleman by whom it was urged! He had reconsidered many subjects, without aspiring to the merit of an obstinate adherence to his first opinion. He had reconsidered his American intercourse bill, and had publicly avowed, that he had parted with every idea which he once entertained upon that subject.—He had reconsidered his India bill, and before it was engrossed, had scarcely suffered one word to remain which belonged to it when it was brought in. He had reconsidered his Irish resolutions, in every part, provision, and principle; and, having first offered them as a bounty to Ireland, he had reconsidered the boon, and annexed a price to it, and then reconsidered his own reconsideration, and abandoned his own indispensable condition! And yet this minister, whose whole government had been one continued series of rash proposition, and ungraceful concession, held it out as a palpable enormity in others, that reconsideration should have produced alteration of sentiment, and that too upon a subject where the first opinion must have been taken upon credit, and the second was called for upon minute information, and authentic inquiry. In the same excellent spirit of reconsideration, many honorable gentlemen round the minister, who had formerly given a decided opinion against the fortifications, were now solicitous to argue in their favour. As an effectual defence of the conduct of the late administration, he could prove, by referring to the estimates and journals of 1783, that they had not the least occasion to resort to the justification of

having changed their minds in consequence of better information ; for the fact was, that they never had, even in the slightest degree, committed themselves either in opinion or approbation of the present plan.

Concerning the history of the rise and progress of fortifications in this island, upon which the right honorable gentleman had laid so much stress ; as if he had proved, that what was not new, must be constitutional, and that the point which had been often tried, must be fit to be carried into execution ; he should maintain, that every word urged on this subject made against the cause which it was brought to support ; for experience, even by their own statement, convinced us of nothing but that the nation had invariably been deluded and defrauded upon this unprincipled plea of fortifications ; that much had been done and undone, many schemes and many projects tried ; many millions spent, and the object avowedly as distant as ever ! So that repeated proofs of past deception were all which they urged as arguments for present confidence ; and it was modestly expected, they would believe, that because a point had been always unsuccessfully attempted, it was now at last certain of being wisely accomplished.

The right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had chosen eagerly to dwell upon a pretended charge of inconsistency which he advanced against an honorable naval officer (Captain Macbride) and which, although the latter had omitted to reply to it, had no other foundation than the right honorable gentleman having thought proper to confound the opinion of the land officers with that of the sea officers. With respect to the report itself, he was ready to admit, that those who had entrenched themselves in constitutional objections only, refusing to be bound by the advice and authority of any board of general officers or engineers whatsoever upon such a subject, had taken strong and respectable ground ; and that

those also, who had argued the subject more with a reference to the state of the revenue of the country, and had seemed to consider the measure as advisable, or otherwise, according as it should prove consistent with the necessary principles of œconomy, were undoubtedly intitled to every attention. For his own part, however, he did not go to the extreme of the reasoning used on either of these topics—every hour produced instances where practices highly dangerous by their precedent, and evidently infringing on the established rights of the subject, were resorted to, unavoidably perhaps, for the purpose of retrieving and maintaining that public credit, without which the affairs of this country were completely desperate. The right honorable gentleman had pledged himself not to press this business, unless he could make it appear to be a measure not less essential to national safety than to the preservation of national credit. Upon this line of argument, the dangers to be apprehended to the constitution, which were stated as eventual and remote, must, of course, give way, and the point of œconomy was wholly out of the question.

The right honorable gentleman had also contended, that the decision of a board specially appointed for this inquiry, and consisting of persons eminently qualified for the judgment expected from them, was the best authority which the country could obtain on the subject; and afforded a surer guide for the opinion and conduct of that house, than either the arguments or the information of its individual members could supply. To this he had already assented, and now repeated his assent; nor did he hesitate to renew the pledge in which the right honorable gentleman had appeared so anxious to fix him, that he, for his own part, mindful of the terms upon which the question was suspended at the close of the last session would rest contented to abide by the decision of a board so described, and to withdraw his objections to the plan,

if it could be fairly made to appear that these gentlemen, (whose names and characters he freely admitted did intitle them to the confidence which was claimed for them) upon a full investigation of the whole subject proposed last year in parliament to be submitted to their inquiry, and being left to their own free and unfettered judgment in forming their decision—had reported, as their decided and unqualified opinion, that the plan proposed by the noble duke, and then under discussion, was a measure which it became the wisdom and prudence of parliament to adopt. Upon this point they were at issue; and the report in his hand was the only authority to which he should appeal, and the sole ground upon which he should argue.

Yet, previous to the least discussion of the matter of the report, he could not omit to take notice of many circumstances attending the manner of its formation. Far from meaning to reflect upon the officers who composed the board, he must beg leave to support the complaint which had been urged by the right honorable gentleman (Colonel Barré) who first suggested this reference, that, in violation of the confidence reposed in ministers, they had not referred the question of a system for the general defence of the country to the board, giving them due time and materials for forming their opinion upon the great and extensive subject; but had merely required from them a short answer relative to two points of attack under certain data of their own imposing.

Many powerful, perhaps unanswerable, objections had been made against the appointment of the noble duke to be president of the board. Some honorable gentlemen had alluded to the peculiar circumstances of the noble duke's personal character;—he had been described as a man who was never known to give up a point; but whether this was the case or not, or whether there was some principles of public profession, to which the noble

duke had not very rigorously adhered, he would not pretend to decide; as he might be suspected of speaking from party prejudices. There was one characteristic, however, of the noble duke's mind, which he thought might be fairly mentioned; as it was a peculiarity which had been publicly brought forward in argument by high authority in that house; and if now referring to it, he were to represent that noble personage as of a temper eager for extravagance, and vehement in the extreme;—if he were to describe him as a person who, having taken up a just principle, was capable of defeating all salutary proceeding upon it; by driving on with a heated imagination to the most flighty and preposterous conclusions; the right honorable gentleman opposite to him (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) would become his authority. He was the person who had led him and the house into that opinion; as must be in the recollection of every honorable gentleman, who, during a former session heard that right honorable gentleman discuss the noble duke's principles of parliamentary reform, and recollected the terms of indignant ridicule with which he had cautioned them against the schemes of so visionary a projector. If, therefore, he was arraigned for following any plan of the noble duke's with a peculiar degree of jealousy, he should leave his justification in the abler hands of the right honorable gentleman.

Yet the noble duke deserved the warmest panegyrics for the striking proofs he had given of his genius as an engineer; which appeared even in the planning and construction of the paper in his hand! The professional ability of the master-general shone as conspicuously there, as it could upon our coasts. He had made it an argument of posts; and conducted his reasoning upon principles of trigonometry, as well as logic. There were certain detached data, like advanced works, to keep the enemy at a distance from the main object in debate.

Strong provisions covered the flanks of his assertions. His very queries were in casements. No impression, therefore, was to be made on this fortress of sophistry by desultory observations; and it was necessary to sit down before it, and assail it by regular approaches. It was fortunate, however, to observe, that notwithstanding all the skill employed by the noble and literary engineer, his mode of defence on paper was open to the same objection which had been urged against his other fortifications; that if his adversary got possession of one of his posts, it became strength against him, and the means of subduing the whole line of his argument.

The points which (Mr. Sheridan said) he should conceive that he had distinctly established from the authentic document before the house, notwithstanding the mutilated state in which it appeared, were—first, that not one word, hint, or suggestion on the part of the naval officers tending to give any approbation, either directly or by implication, to the scheme of fortification then in debate, was to be found in that paper; but that, on the contrary, from the manner in which a reference was made to the minutes of the naval officers, of which the result was withheld, a strong presumption might be grounded, wholly independent of the information which the house had received from members of that board, that those minutes did contain a condemnation of the plan. He did not expect to hear it argued that the result of those minutes could not be communicated, because they were mixed with dangerous matters of intelligence; they had shewn a sufficient degree of ingenuity in the manner of having extracted them from the report; and it would prove extraordinary indeed if wherever the judgment was unfavorable, it should have been so blended and complicated with matter of detail and dangerous discussion, that no chemical process in the ordnance laboratory could possibly separate them; whilst, on the contrary, every approving

opinion, like a light subtile oily fluid, floated at the top at once; and the clumsiest clerk was capable of presenting it to the house, pure and untinged by a single particle of the argument or information upon which it was produced.

In the second place, he should contend that the opinion given by the land officers in favour of the plan, was hypothetical and conditional; and that they had unanimously and invariably, throughout the whole business, refused to lend their authority to, or make themselves responsible for, the data or suppositions upon which that opinion was to be maintained. This circumstance deserved the more particular attention of the house, because the report had been so artfully managed, as in many points to appear to support a right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) in a contrary assertion.

Next, he regarded himself as unanswerably justified in concluding that the data themselves were founded upon a supposition of events so improbable and desperate, that the existence of the case contained in them, carried with it not the imminent danger of Portsmouth and Plymouth only, but the actual conquest of the island. Upon this occasion, he did not think much detail of argument was necessary, after he had, at least in his opinion, irrefragably established, that the case alluded to, in the words often recurred to, "under the circumstance of the data," was literally this, "The absence of the whole British fleet for the space of three months; while an army of thirty or forty thousand men was ready on the enemy's coast to invade this country, that enemy to chuse their point of landing, to land and encamp, with heavy artillery, and every necessary for a siege; whilst no force in Great Britain could be collected in less than two months to oppose them." By no means could he admit as a fact, even taking it for granted that the enemy should decide in assaulting no part but Portsmouth and

Plymouth, he should, with most polite hostility, scorn to strike a blow at the heart of the empire; but in the courtly spirit of a French duellist, should aim only to wound in the sword-arm; yet even under this idea, must he deny that these only objects provided for, could be said to be effectually secured. For, first, it was not made out that the enemy might not either land or march to the eastward of Plymouth, where no defence was pretended; and, secondly, the whole question turning upon a supposition of our being inferior at sea, in that case a presumption of the safe return of the inferior fleet and its beating the superior fleet, was the sole resource for the relief of the besieged dock yards; the defence of which was expressly stated in the report, to be calculated only against the force, and for the time expressed in the data; so that the enemy having it obviously in his power, whilst master of the sea, to recruit his own army, as well as to keep the other exposed parts of this kingdom in check and alarm, and thereby to prevent the possibility of our assembling and uniting a force sufficient to raise the siege, it followed that if either the enemy's army exceeded the number supposed, or at the time was prolonged beyond the period calculated, the whole of this effectual security vanished under their own reasoning, and we should merely have prepared a strong hold in the country for our foe; a hold which the circumstances under which he was supposed to make the attack, would enable him for ever to retain.

Mr. Sheridan now proceeded to his remarks concerning the distinction which had during the debate been made relative to the different persons who were supposed to form the opposition to the presnet plan, and said he had heard the old insinuations of party views resorted to by those who defended the original motion; and some honorable gentlemen who most strenuously opposed it, had,

however, in a kind of language which he could not avoid taking notice of, disavowed any party feeling or connection with the party in question. With respect to himself, he was happy that the business had worn so little the appearance of party as it had; and although he had moved for and obtained the report, which had been so much discussed, and upon which so much had turned, he had proved himself ready and anxious (as the persons alluded to well knew) to resign the business into the hands of the respectable gentleman who had upon that day so ably brought it forward. He could never, for one, submit to the imputation, that the party with whom he had the honour to act were supporting or opposing any measure upon the motives less just, less fair or less honorable than those which influenced any other description of gentlemen in that house. The present question could not even be pretended to be pursued with party policy, as there was not a person in the house who could avoid confessing that party purposes would be better gratified by entangling the right honorable gentleman in the pursuit of this obnoxious and unpopular scheme. But the gentleman who had upon that day led the opposition to it, had been desired to take such a lead, because it appeared among the most effectual means of warding off an injury from the country; otherwise to be enlisting under leaders for the day, or courting the temporary assistance of any description of gentlemen, would, in his opinion, prove a conduct as impolitic as undignified. On the other hand, to recede from any important contest, because gentlemen unconnected with them were likely to have the credit of the event, would deservedly cast on them the reproach of being a faction and not a party. But this was not their conduct; they could defend their situation upon system and principle; however reduced their ranks, they were more desirous to prove they were in the right than to in-

crease their numbers. He was confident, however, that the gentlemen to whom he might be supposed to allude, were too liberal to set a less value upon their support that day because it was unaccompanied by adulation, or any endeavour to canvass for their future connection. Let us (added Mr. Sheridan) this night be firmly embodied in a cause we equally approve. Let us do this great service to the country; then separate, and seek opposing camps. Let them return with double triumph, if they will, of having conferred an important benefit on their constituents and the nation, and a real obligation on the government. Let them have the credit with the country of having defeated the minister's measure; and the merit with his friends, of having rescued him from a perilous dilemma. Leave us only the silent satisfaction that, without envying the reputation of those whom we were content to follow, without being piqued by insinuations against our motives, and without debating whether the minister might not be served by our success, we gave an earnest and zealous assistance in defeating a measure, which, under the specious pretence of securing our coasts, strikes at the root of our great national defence, and at the heart of the constitution itself.

The gallery being cleared the house divided on the motion "that the words proposed to be left out, stand as part of the question." ayes 169; noes 169.

The numbers being equal, the Speaker remarked that, under his inability to say any thing new upon a subject which had been already so thoroughly debated; and being too much exhausted by fatigue to enter largely into it then, even if he possessed talent enough to do it in a manner which would tend to throw any new light upon it, he would content himself with merely giving his vote against the original motion, and declaring that the noes had carried the question."

MARCH 6.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

Major Scott on the first day of this session, 24th of January, 1786, reminded the house that Mr. Hastings had arrived in England some months; and he therefore called upon Mr. Burke to produce the charges which he had pledged himself in the preceding sessions to bring forward against Mr. Hastings; and to fix the earliest day possible for the discussion of them. Mr. Burke replied to the major, by relating an anecdote of the great Duke of Parma, who being challenged by Henry the Fourth of France "to bring his forces into the open field, and instantly decide their disputes," answered with a smile, "that he knew very well, what he had to do, and was not come so far to be directed by an enemy."

*On the 17th Mr. Burke brought this subject before the house.—After desiring the clerk to read the 44th and 45th resolutions of censure and recal of Mr. Hastings, moved by Mr. Dundas on the 29th of May, 1782, he said that he entirely agreed in opinion with the friends of that gentleman, that the resolutions which had been read should not be suffered to remain a mere calumny on the page of their journals; at the same time he lamented that the solemn business of the day should have devolved upon him by the natural death of some, by the political death of others, and in some instances by a death to principle and to duty. Having endeavoured to remove the odium of appearing a forward prosecutor of public delinquency, Mr. Burke called back the recollection of the house to the several proceedings which had been had in parliament respecting the mal-administration of the company's officers in India, from the period of Lord Clive's government down to the reports of the secret and select committees, the resolutions moved thereupon, and the approbation repeatedly given to these proceedings by His Majesty from the throne. It was upon the authority, the sanction, and the encouragement thus afforded him, that he rested this accusation of Mr. Hastings as a delinquent of the first magnitude. After going through an infinite variety of topics relative to this part of his subject; he proceeded to explain the process which he should recommend to the house to pursue. There were he observed, three several modes of proceeding against state delinquents, which according to the exigencies of particular cases had each at different times been adopted. The first was to direct the Attorney-General to prosecute; from this mode he acknowledged himself totally averse, not only because he had just discovered in the gentleman who filled that situation, that zeal for public justice in the present instance, which was a necessary qualification in a public prosecutor; but more especially, because he thought a trial in the Court of King's Bench, amidst a cloud of causes of *meum et tuum*, of trespass, assault, battery, *assumpsit* and *trover*, &c. not at all suited to the size and enormity of the offender, or to*

the complicated nature and extent of his offences. Another mode of proceeding occasionally adopted by the house was by bill of pains and penalties; this mode he also greatly disapproved of. The only process that remained, was by the ancient and constitutional mode of impeachment; and even in adopting this process he should advise the house to proceed with all possible caution and prudence. It had been usual, he observed, in the first instance, to resolve that the party accused should be impeached, and then a committee to examine the evidence, and find the articles on which the impeachment was to be founded. This mode of proceeding, had, from the heat and passion with which the minds of men were sometimes apt to be inflamed, led the house on more than one occasion, into the disgraceful dilemma, of either abandoning the impeachment they had voted, or of preferring articles which they had not evidence to support. In order to steer clear of this disgrace, he should move that such papers as were necessary for substantiating the guilt of Mr. Hastings, if guilt there was, should be laid before the house, and that these papers together with the charges extracted from them, should be referred to a committee of the whole house, and evidence examined thereon. If the charges should then appear, what he believed they would be found to be, charges of the blackest and foulest nature, and supported by competent and sufficient evidence, the house would then proceed with confidence and dignity to the bar of the house of lords. After a speech of considerable length Mr. Burke moved, "That copies of all correspondence, since the month of January, 1782, between Warren Hastings, Esquire, governor general of Bengal, and the Court of Directors, as well before as since the return of the said governor general relative to presents and other money, particularly received by the said governor general, be laid before this house."

This question being carried, Mr. Burke proceeded to move for a great variety of other papers, which he alleged were necessary for the prosecution of the cause he had undertaken. These motions produced much conversation; and, towards the close of the day, there appeared some hesitation in the ministers of the crown, whether it would be proper to produce whatever papers might be called for on the mere suggestion of the mover, without insisting upon his stating the connection they had with the matters contained in the reports of the committees, beyond which they did not think he ought to go in the matter of his intended accusation. At this stage of the business, the house adjourned at one o'clock, on account of the illness of the Speaker; and the day following the conversation was renewed upon a motion for papers relative to the affairs of Oude. Major Scott followed Mr. Burke, and agreed in opinion with him, that the papers were necessary to be produced; and Mr. Pitt, after many professions of the most unbiassed impartiality, concurred with them; remarking, at the same time, that it would be but fair and candid in Mr. Burke, to give the house some specific information of the subject matter of his charges, and to state the grounds and reasons

for the production of such papers as he might think it necessary to call for in support of them. In compliance with this request, Mr. Burke read to the house a short abstract of the several charges which he designed to bring forward; and pointed out the matters which the several papers he afterwards moved for were intended to explain and substantiate. The rest of Mr. Burke's motions met with little opposition; till on the 3d of March, he moved for copies of letters and other papers, relative to the treaty of peace with the Mahrattas. This motion was opposed by Mr. Dundas and Mr. Pitt, on two grounds; first, that the treaty in question was a wise and salutary treaty, and had saved the British empire in Asia; and, secondly, that the production of the papers moved for would discover transactions relative to that peace, which ought to be kept a secret from the country powers in India; inasmuch as it would disclose the means by which the several states that were confederate against England were made jealous of each other, and the intrigues by which they were induced to dissolve that confederacy. After a long debate the house divided, and the motion was rejected by a majority of 87 to 44.

The conduct of administration, in refusing the papers, and the reason upon which that refusal was grounded, appeared to the members in opposition of so serious and alarming a nature, that the same motion was twice renewed, on the 6th and 17th of March, by Mr. Fox, but restricted to the correspondence of a Major Brown, an agent of Mr. Hastings, at the court of Delhi. Copies of many parts of this correspondence were in the hands of some private individuals in England; and they were used, in the course of the debate, both to prove the criminal conduct of Mr. Hastings, and the futility of the pretension of secrecy.

In the course of the debate on the 3d of March, Major Scott observed, "that when Mr. Fox brought in his India bill, an intimation was given, in a private conversation which he had with a person of authority, commissioned by Mr. Sheridan, that matters might be accommodated; and he made no doubt, had Mr. Hastings then come home, he would have heard nothing of this calumny, and all these serious accusations." Mr. Sheridan, who was absent on this day, the 3d, answered the attack on the 6th.

Mr. Sheridan complained of the manner of refusing material papers, without stating any particular specific reason for such refusal; but what he principally rose for, he said, had been in order to give the house an explanation of that charge, or rather insinuation, respecting him, which an honorable gentleman (Major Scott) opposite to him had advanced. The committee would recollect, that when he heard of the matter on Friday evening, he

had acted in the manner which he hoped they would think most proper for him to adopt under the circumstances of the case as they then stood. He had since that had an interview with the person, with whom he had talked upon the subject; and who, indeed, he had commissioned to go to the honorable gentleman opposite to him, and he did not doubt he would do him the justice fully to explain to the house when he sat down, that he had been mistaken in his idea; having been satisfied by the gentleman in question that he was mistaken. In order to make the house more clearly understand what he meant, it would be necessary for him to state a little of some opinions, which he had ever reserved in his own mind, and did not intend to have stated, had not this business made it necessary. With regard to India affairs, he had thought there were but two lines of conduct to be pursued after those emphatic resolutions of the 28th of May, 1782, had been voted. The one was to recal Mr. Hastings, immediately, by the strong arm of parliament, and punish him exemplarily; the other, to bring in an India bill, in which, on grounds of expediency, on account of the times not bearing so strong a measure, and the difference of opinion respecting it, no retrospect should be had, but all the clauses should look to the future. So thinking, when the India bill of his right honorable friend was preparing, the latter measure appeared to him most expedient to be followed, more especially as the time for calling home Mr. Hastings, by act of parliament, was, in his mind, gone by; and, therefore, he had sent a friend to the honorable gentleman opposite to him to know whether Mr. Hastings would come home, if recalled. In the course of the conversation which he had with his friend, the intended India bill was certainly mentioned, but merely as matter of conversation, and not as a proposition to the honorable gentleman. This, he had the happiness to say, was the true state of the case; as the gentleman in

question had assured both him and the honorable gentleman opposite to him ; and that there had not been the most distant idea of bartering with Mr. Hastings for his support of the India bill.

Major Scott perfectly admitted, " that the gentleman whom he had seen originally on the business, had confirmed, since the 3d, every syllable which Mr. Sheridan had uttered ; and he begged leave to thank him for so fair a statement of the transaction." The house afterwards divided on the question ; ayes 34 ; noes 88.

THIS ABSTRACT OF THE WHOLE PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS TO THE SIXTH OF MARCH, WILL BE FOUND CONTINUED IN REGULAR ORDER ON THE DAYS MR. SHERIDAN DELIVERED HIS SENTIMENTS ON THAT INTERESTING SUBJECT.

MARCH 16.

INDIA BILL.

Mr. Dundas moved " for leave to bring in a bill to amend and explain the India bill." Mr. Pitt seconded the motion.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that the excessive condescension and boundless good nature with which a right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had risen to support his right honorable and learned friend's motion, was unparalleled ! What an astonishing instance of true liberality of mind, at the very moment he had heard him declare that the purport and principle of his new bill went to cutting up by the roots the right honorable gentleman's own India bill, which the learned gentleman had proved by his speech to have been a very foolish piece of business. On this occasion, Mr. Sheridan added, that he should presume to warn the right honorable and learned gentleman in time, that he ought to bring all the parts of his bill forward together, and not to imitate the conduct of his right honorable friend (the Chancellor of the

Exchequer,) whose India bill, when first introduced, proved so imperfect and so improper, that it was obliged to be completely altered in all its parts in the committee, and four and twenty new clauses were inserted. What the right honorable and learned gentleman called "an addition to the principle of Mr. Pitt's bill of 1784," was, on the contrary, a direct reversal of its principle, and the substitution of a new principle as to the particular point in question; for, by the bill of 1784, every thing in council in India was to be carried by the majority of voices; whereas, in the new bill every thing was to depend solely on the single opinion of the Governor-General. And here he must desire to bring back to the remembrance of the house, that, on the first day of the session, they had been told by a right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), that the reason why no notice of India had been taken in the speech from the throne was, because the government of India had been established on a solid and permanent footing. Surely the information just given to the house, and the motion now under their discussion, appeared to operate like absolute contradictions against the existence of establishments of solidity and permanency!

The question was put and carried.

MARCH 17.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS

When the order and business of the day had been gone through, the Speaker called to Mr. Fox, who rose immediately, and desired that, previously to his troubling the house on the subject, which he wished to bring under their consideration, certain resolutions of the 28th of May, 1782, might be read.—They were read accordingly.

Resolved, "That the orders of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, which have conveyed to their servants abroad a prohibitory condemnation of all schemes of conquest and enlargement of dominion, by prescribing certain rules and boundaries for the ope-

ration of their military force, and enjoining a strict adherence to a system of defence, upon the principle of the treaty of Illahabad, were founded no less in wisdom and policy, than in justice and moderation.

Resolved, "That every transgression of those orders, without evident necessity, by any of the several British governments in India, has been highly reprehensible, and has tended, in a chief degree, to weaken the force and influence, and to diminish the resources, of the Company in those parts.

Resolved, "That every interference, as a party, in the domestic or national quarrels of the country powers, and all new engagements with them in offensive alliance, have been wisely and providently forbidden by the Company in their commands to their administrations in India.

Resolved, "That every unnecessary or unavoidable deviation from those well-advised rules, should be followed with very severe reprehension and punishment for it, as an instance of wilful disobedience of orders; and as tending to disturb and destroy that state of tranquillity and peace with all their neighbours, the preservation of which has been recommended as the first principle of policy to the British government in India.

Resolved, "That the maintenance of an inviolable character for moderation, good faith, and scrupulous regard to treaty, ought to have been the simple grounds on which the British government should have endeavored to establish an influence superior to that of other Europeans over the minds of the native powers in India; and that the danger and discredit arising from the forfeiture of this pre-eminence, could not be compensated by the temporary success of any plan of violence or injustice.

Resolved, "That as an essential failure in the executive conduct of the Supreme Council, or Presidencies, would make them justly liable to the most serious animadversions of their superiors; so should any relaxation, without sufficient cause, in these principles of good government, on the part of the Directors themselves, bring upon them, in a heavier degree, the resentment of the legislative power of their country, which alone can interpose an effectual correction to the general misrule.

Resolved, "That it appears, that the Government-General had been previously in possession of a letter from the Duan of the Rajah of Berar, containing overtures for mediation for peace and alliance with the Peshwa; and that this material information was wholly suppressed by them in their dispatches to the Court of Directors; but a copy of it was sent, by the same conveyance, to the private agent of Mr. Hastings; and that, in thus neglecting to make immediate communication to the Court of Directors of such important intelligence, the Government-General appear to have failed in an essential part of their duty."

The resolutions being read, Mr. Fox addressed the house; and on concluding moved for the Delhi papers.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that in spite of the extensive talents and brilliant eloquence of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) who spoke last, his observations were much too barren of solid argument to constitute a refutation of the reasoning of his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox), who had unanswerably contended for the production of the papers, upon the proof, which he as irrefragably established, that they contained the clearest and most incontrovertible evidence, of a negociation for an offensive alliance entered into by Mr. Hastings with the country powers. Nor had his right honorable friend maintained by less unquestionable allegations, that were these wonderfully secret papers divulged, no danger whatsoever could accrue to the state from their publicity. For his own part, he must confess, that were he to place an approving confidence in the measures of an administration, and any honorable member should move a question for papers affecting the executive government of the country ; and His Majesty's Ministers who were to be responsible, should stand up and declare, that the granting the papers would prove dangerous to the state, he would desist from pressing such a motion. But was this the case now ? No ; the right honorable gentleman, as His Majesty's Minister, was not responsible for the administration of the executive government of India ; that government was not the government of His Majesty, whose name and authority had no connection with it ; it was merely the government of a trading company, conducted by their servants, and, therefore, all ideas of confidence in the King's Ministers were out of the question. What was the Board of Control ? Nothing more than another Board of Directors, of a superior order indeed, and nominated by His Majesty in the first instance. But it was rather curious, that the right honorable and learned gentleman should be one of the persons (and, perhaps, the principal, in talking of India secrets, and

refusing necessary papers on that ground) when he, himself, had formed his own motions for papers in 1781 and 1782, in the broadest and most general words; calling for all the papers relating to the revenue; all the papers relating to the civil government; &c. &c. At that time, and it was a time of war, nobody dreamt of a secret respecting India. How happened it then, that when the conduct of Lord Clive was under inquiry, when every other India inquiry was going on, that from the earliest periods it had never been discovered, that there might be a state secret in India till the year 1786. It was downright nonsense to talk with a grave face about secrecy, and the dangerous tendency of letting the papers moved for be seen; when it was well known, not only what were their contents, but every transaction to which they alluded.

In order more fully to convince the house that the papers would establish a most extraordinary series of duplicity in the conduct of Mr. Hastings, respecting the negociation with the Mogul, Mr. Sheridan went into a detailed investigation of every minute circumstance of the transactions of Major Browne, from the time of his leaving Calcutta, in October, 1783, to the arrival of Mr. Hastings at Lucknow, with all the relative facts of the flight of the son of the Mogul; of that prince's reception by Mr. Hastings and the Nabob of Oude; the seizure of the old Minister of the Mogul by the Vizier Aphrasead Cawn, and the putting the Mogul into the hands of Madagee Scindia; reasoning upon each particular as he proceeded, and deducing such inferences as he conceived the premises clearly warranted. All these he contended, concurred in proving, that Mr. Hastings had acted in a manner so intricate and extraordinary, that though he by no means wished it to be understood as suggesting it either as a charge, or an insinuation, that Mr. Hastings was conscious of being guilty; yet, with the purest innocence on the part of that gentleman, the

suspicion to which it gave rise (at least in his mind) was, that Mr. Hastings, from an idea, that the party he considered as his political enemies, were in power at home, might entertain a wish to provide himself a refuge at the court of Dehli. On this occasion he must take the liberty to observe, that much inconsistency had, to appearance, marked the conduct of a learned and right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas), who discovered an aversion from either manfully standing forward himself as the first accuser of Mr. Hastings, or being at least a warm supporter of the accusation. What could be the reason of the backwardness of the learned and right honorable gentleman, who had built his fame on his conduct as a conductor of Indian inquiries? Was it because he thought to secure that situation he had acquired by prosecuting one supposed delinquent, that he took pains to protect another? Or was it from a kind of gratitude for East India delinquency, to which he had been so much obliged, that he chose to be his friend, and would not, as it were, kick down the ladder on which he had risen? From whatsoever motives a conduct so singular had arisen, it was fair to point at the political versatility of the right honorable and learned gentleman, who could, in 1786, oppose the substantiation of resolutions, for which, in 1782, he had particularly moved.

The house divided on the motion ; ayes 73 ; noes 140.

MARCH 24.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that he had a proposition to offer previous to their resolving themselves into a committee, which he hoped would not be objected to. The bill consisted of two parts : the first part related to the regulations of the government in

India, the second to the new court of judicature to be instituted at home, for the trial of persons charged with having been guilty of acts of delinquency and misdemeanor in India. As these were separate and distinct objects, he wished them to be separately considered; and, as probably administration had made it a condition with Earl Cornwallis, that he should go out to Bengal invested with certain powers, it might be their desire to pass so much of the bill as related to the system of government to be adopted in India as soon as possible. The same necessity for dispatch certainly did not apply to the judicature part of the bill; and as that part had been but little considered when the bill of 1784 passed, he could wish that the learned and right honorable gentleman opposite to him would consent to divide the bill, and separate the two subjects. In that case, administration would have it in their power to make good any promises which they might have made to Earl Cornwallis; and time might be taken for such a deliberate discussion of the judicature part of the bill, as the importance of it required. Mr. Sheridan concluded with moving, "That it be an instruction to the said committee to divide the bill in two."

The instruction passed.

MARCH 27.

NATIONAL DEBT.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that when he considered that scarcely many minutes had elapsed subsequently to the delivery of the report of the committee, to inquire concerning the state of the national finances into the hands of the several members of that house; he could not avoid intimating to a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) his earnest wishes that he would consent to postpone the consideration of the report until either the ensuing

Monday or Friday. Great was the importance of the subject, and consequently it must make every gentleman desire that it should be considered and discussed in as full a house as possible; and, therefore, as the call of the house stood for the next Tuesday, he should conceive it would be right to let the subject be discussed as near the day of the call as possible. He had looked with accuracy enough in the report to observe, that it would not give the satisfaction expected from it. He was aware that another business stood for Monday, but the deferring of that for one or two days, he presumed, would make no difference; yet, if the consideration of the report was postponed only till Friday, even that slight procrastination would give gentlemen more time to examine and understand it.

To this Mr. Pitt replied that the arguments brought forward were by no means sufficient to warrant a delay in a business of such importance. He therefore moved, "That His Majesty's most gracious speech to both houses of parliament, upon the 24th of January last, might be read." The clerk accordingly read, and Mr. Pitt concluded with moving,

"That this house will, upon Wednesday morning next, resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider of so much of His Majesty's said most gracious speech to both houses of Parliament, as recommends to this house the establishment of a fixed plan for the reduction of the national debt."

Mr. Pitt next moved,

"That the report which, upon Tuesday last, was made from the select committee, to whom it was referred to examine and state the several accounts and other papers presented to the house in this session of parliament relating to the public income and expenditure, and to report to the house what may be expected to be the annual amount of the said income and expenditure in future, be referred to the said committee."

Mr. Sheridan begged leave to remind the right hon. gentleman of his error, for the purpose of rectifying which, he should not hesitate to assert, that he by no means stated that he had read the whole of the report; he only said, he had looked at the report with sufficient accuracy to see that it would not afford the public the satisfaction expected. However, he certainly would not press the matter; but

he hoped that the right honorable gentleman, by his eagerness for an early day, looked forward to a day of triumph, and not to a day of disappointment to the public, and of disgrace to himself. As far as he had seen, so far from the existence of a considerable surplus at present, there was not any; and therefore the report completely disproved all that the right honorable gentleman had advanced relative to the matter.

Mr. Pitt's motion passed.

MARCH 29.

NATIONAL DEBT.

It has been already shewn that on the 27th, Mr. Pitt took notice of that part of His Majesty's speech which related to the necessity of providing for the diminution of the national debt; he had at the same time given the house to understand, that such was the present flourishing condition of the revenue, that the annual national revenue, would not only equal the annual national disbursement, but would leave a surplus of considerable magnitude. This surplus, he said, he meant to form into a permanent fund, to be constantly and invariably applied to the liquidation of the public debt. In pursuance of this information to the house, and in order to ascertain the amount of the surplus in question, Mr. Pitt, previous to his entering into the state of the finances, or ways and means, for the year, moved the third resolution mentioned in the account of the proceedings, on the 27th. The select committee having framed their report, laid it before the house, on the 21st of March; and on this day, the 29th, Mr. Pitt, together with the supplies, and ways and means, for the year, brought the consideration of the national debt, and his proposition for the diminution of it, formally before the house. After entering at large into the actual and probable resources of the country, he said, there was but little doubt but that the growing resources of the country, and the contingent receipts of the different sums he had mentioned, would be more than sufficient, without a loan, to discharge the exceedings which our establishment during the next three or four years would amount to, beyond their permanent level, as stated in the report. But if it should be otherwise, he nevertheless was of opinion, that money should rather be borrowed for the discharge of those extraordinary demands, than that the institution of the fund in question should be postponed, or infringed upon at any time after it was established. He next proceeded to explain the mode he meant to adopt, in order to insure the due application

of this fund to its destined object:—he proposed, he said, to vest in a certain number of commissioners the full power of disposing of it in the purchase of stock for the public, in their own names. These commissioners should receive the annual million by quarterly payments of £250,000, to be issued out of the exchequer before any other money, except the interest of the national debt itself: by these provisions the fund would be secured; and no deficiencies in the national revenues could affect it; but such must be separately provided for by parliament. The accumulated compound interest on a million yearly, together with the annuities that would fall into that fund, would, he said, in twenty-eight years amount to such a sum as would leave a surplus of four millions annually to be applied, if necessary, to the exigencies of the state. In appointing the commissioners he should, he said, endeavor to choose persons of such weight and character as corresponded with the importance of the commission they were to execute. The Speaker of the house of commons, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Master of the Rolls, the Governor and Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, and the Accountant-General of the High Court of Chancery, were persons who, from their several situations, he should think highly proper to be of the number. Mr. Pitt concluded by moving, "That the sum of one million be annually granted to certain commissioners, to be by them applied to the purchase of stock, towards discharging the public debt of this country; which money shall arise out of the surplus, excess, and overplus monies, composing the fund commonly called the Sinking Fund."

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that there was, in point of fact, no surplus whatever in the present year; a circumstance evinced not only by the report itself, but by the whole of the right honorable gentleman's speech that day. The day had commenced very inauspiciously; and when he used that phrase he meant no disrespect to His Majesty; but merely to hint at the royal message relative to the civil list, which was an extraordinary introduction surely to a business, the event of which the public had been taught to look forward to with the pleasing expectation of finding a surplus in their favour. He was a little surprised, that the right honorable gentleman, who, when he two years ago asked for £60,000 to clear the debt then due on the civil list, had in a manner pledged himself to the house that no farther debts should arise, and that the house

should not again be applied to for farther grants on the subject, should come again so soon for so large a sum of the public money.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt said, across the house, Oh no, I never said any such thing.

Mr. Sheridan replied, the right honorable gentleman must excuse him ; words said at so remote a period might be forgotten ; but he was clear in his recollection of the circumstances ; and indeed it was evident he must have used some such argument, or else why should the right honorable gentleman have asked for £60,000 two years ago, and come down again then, and claim grants for an arrear of so large an amount as £210,000.

To this Mr. Pitt replied, that he considered it " as the most extraordinary attack that was ever made upon him. Mr. Sheridan had said, words might be forgotten after they had been said : it was undoubtedly true ; but it was also true, that words might be misrepresented ; and if ever he had heard a gross misrepresentation of his words, it had been the charge stated by the honorable gentleman," &c.

Mr. Sheridan replied, that the right honorable gentleman might indulge himself as much as he pleased in throwing out charges of misrepresentation ; but he had spoken what, in his opinion, as well as in the opinion of several gentlemen in that house, was a true statement of the right honorable gentleman's own words. If 60,000*l.* was asked for as the debt two years ago, how came it that 210,000*l.* was now wanted ? As to the idea of redeeming a mortgage of 50,000*l.* a year on the civil list, why had not that been regularly paid, since government were answerable for it ?

The question was then put, and agreed to.

MARCH 30.

MR. MARSHAM'S BILL FOR DISFRANCHISING
ALL VOTERS EMPLOYED BY THE NAVY AND
ORDNANCE BOARD.

Mr. SHERIDAN declared, that the right honorable and learned gentleman (Mr. Dundas) had truly said, that he never made an assertion without being ready to shew his face at the same time; for he believed the house would agree with him, that the right honorable and learned gentleman had never advanced an argument, however irreconcilable with reason or logic, upon which he had not been perfectly ready to put a good countenance. With regard to the right honorable and learned gentleman's dish of disfranchisements; he, of all men, should not have set it before the house; who doubtless must well remember that the right honorable and learned gentleman had not only, first, been induced to nibble a little at a plate or side dish filled with the same ingredients, but had afterwards been brought to sit down to a whole course of dishes of that sort; when the right honorable and learned gentleman's right honorable friend near him had served up his grand entertainment of parliamentary reform. The object of that reform had been, not to disfranchise a single description of men merely, but a large number of voters from many different boroughs.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt denied this assertion.

Mr. Sheridan thanked the right honorable gentleman for his correction; and said, he recollected the people were to be paid for giving up their franchises; which suited his argument better;—because every body knew where money was in the case, the right honorable and learned gentleman would be better pleased. But, how unconstitutional was the idea of purchasing with a bribe, that which

it had ever been contended no Englishman could sell or part with for money—his unalienable right of voting at an election ! He next alluded to what Lord Mulgrave had said, respecting that man's deserving to lose his head, who used the influence of the crown improperly.

His lordship rose to set Mr. Sheridan right ; and repeated his words, declaring he had said, that man ought to lose his head, who exercised the powers of government in the manner alluded to.

Mr. Sheridan resumed his argument ; and was glad to find the expression was *ought* to lose his head ; because if it had been *would* have lost his head, the right honorable and learned gentleman would not, in all probability, that day had a face to have shewn in that house. Mr. Sheridan animadverted upon part of Sir Charles Middleton's speech ; declaring that there must be something exceedingly pure and patriotic indeed in the blood of those shipwrights, who condescended to work in the King's yards for 2s. 4d. per day, when the honorable baronet had stated they could get 5s. per day in the merchants' yards.

APRIL 3.

EAST INDIA AFFAIRS.

The order of the day having been read for the house to resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, the Speaker left the chair, having previously put the question on the motion " That the several reports which since the year 1772, have been made from the committees of secrecy appointed to inquire into the causes of the war in the Carnatic ; and of the condition of the British possessions in those parts ; and from the select committees appointed to take into consideration the state of the administration of justice in the provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, be referred to the said committee."

Mr. SHERIDAN contended that the house were not then sitting as judges ; nor did Mr. Hastings want an advocate ; neither was the loss of thirteen provinces, nor of a whole army, at all in point to the subject under consideration. But he owned he

was a good deal surprised at hearing the learned Lord Advocate so severe on the noble earl (Cornwallis); for when he talked of the loss of an army, he presumed the learned lord must have meant him; and surely the noble earl was, at this time, a favorite with administration! Their granting to him the post of governor-general, proved clearly that his sins were forgiven him, and his pardon signed. If the committee were rightly to adhere to forms, they had it not in their power to receive any charge, notwithstanding the charge had been called for so often. He desired that the order of the day might be minutely and distinctly read; which being done, he contended that the order clearly confined them to the examination of the written, and to the receipt of the parole evidence; and that the natural duty of the committee would be to make a report; out of which report the house would have to draw and extract the charge. If therefore the arguments of the gentlemen on the other side of the house were to prevail, the report must certainly be to this effect: "Your committee have not examined the evidence, which you referred to us, and directed us to investigate; but we report the charge, which you did not direct us to receive."

APRIL 5,

SUPPLY TO BE GRANTED TO HIS MAJESTY.

Mr. SHERIDAN begged leave to remind the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) that he had misunderstood him on a former day, when he had talked of the right honorable gentleman's having pledged himself that there should be no future debt accrue from the civil list. He then drew an inference from what the right honorable gentleman had that day said, that if His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales should find his income too small, and application should be made to that house, that the right

honorable gentleman was of opinion it ought to be increased; and any debts which His Royal Highness might have incurred, paid.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt again repeated what he had before said, that having had no instructions on the subject of His Royal Highness's establishment, he could not take upon him to speak officially concerning it; nor would he be so presumptuous as to entertain or express any private opinion whatever.

Mr. Sheridan declared that he should still understand that if any debts incurred by His Royal Highness were to be, in future, stated by the right honorable gentleman, whether by message from the crown, or by any other proper authority, they were to be considered as extraordinaries of the civil list, and not within the right honorable gentleman's present pledge. A bill (Mr. Burke's) on regulating the payment of the civil list expenses, expressly said, that no debt should be incurred upon it in future. It was absurd to let the bill remain in full force, and yet come down in the face of an act of parliament, and call upon the house to vote money for the debts of the crown. The right honorable gentleman ought either to bring in a bill to explain and amend, or ask for no more money on the civil list account. He shrewdly suspected that as 30,000*l.* was the precise debt now asked for, that the expense of keeping the noble Earl of Chesterfield for two years together, nominal ambassador to the court of Madrid; and the expense of sending out a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Eden) to negotiate the treaty of commerce, occasioned that debt; and what led him to form this conjecture was, because the sums squared so well together;—the expense on the noble earl's account being 25,000*l.*; and the other 5000*l.* He gave the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Eden) credit for possessing great knowledge of the subject, and for being exceedingly fit to negotiate the treaty, but it nevertheless behoved the right honorable gentleman to be able to assure the house that so large a sum of the public money

would not be wasted; but that he had good reason to believe the treaty would be made, and the object of his mission would be answered. Observing Mr. Pitt smile, Mr. Sheridan expressed his astonishment that, whilst he delivered his sentiments upon a subject of such uncommon consequence to the country at large, he should, if unbecoming smiles could have that effect, be treated by the right honorable gentleman as an object of ridicule.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt contended, that the honorable gentleman had been long in the habit of putting words into his mouth for the purpose of giving those words whatever interpretation he thought most likely to answer his own ends. He had now gone farther, and pretended to interpret even his smile; and give it a turn which he was by no means warranted assigning to it. In fact, his smile was only occasioned by the nature of the honorable gentleman's argument; which the committee must be sensible was highly ridiculous. For what could be more absurd than to call upon him to say what progress had been made in the treaty, when he had not yet an official account of the ambassador's having arrived at the place of negociation.

Mr. Sheridan declared, that he would not believe that the right honorable gentleman's smile was a smile in ridicule of his argument; but rather the sneer of vexation, that he should use it; and he would undertake to prove that no man of common sense would deem his argument ridiculous, because he had every reason to suppose that the right honorable gentleman was not in earnest in sending out the right honorable negociator (Mr. Eden). If he had been in earnest, he would undoubtedly have sent him out sooner, when the treaty could have been accomplished; and not when it was too late to expect its achievement. Though the right honorable gentleman might not be able to declare when the treaty might be ended, yet he might say, that it was probable it would, sooner or later, and that the court of France was earnest upon the occasion. He had, therefore, been guilty of no absurdity in what he had said respecting the treaty, in his first speech. He declared, that, from what he knew of the matter, while he belonged to the Treasury, it was ex-

tremely difficult, with any management, to keep the expenses of the civil list within due bounds; but that by the pensions which fell in, and by other material aids, he was persuaded that it was possible to keep His Majesty's expenses within the limit of his income; and he hoped that the proper means for doing so would be adopted.

APRIL 6.

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he would not go into any farther argument upon the subject that day, but would move a string of resolutions upon the state of the revenue on Wednesday next. In the mean time, as an honorable gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Rose) had, on the preceding day, said, in express terms, that the four and a half per cent. fund, drawn from the Leeward Islands, was the private money of His Majesty; and, as he was satisfied the fund was granted for public purposes, he wished the house to be informed how the produce of that fund, and its application stood; and therefore he begged leave to move, "That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, that there be laid before this house, an account of the four and a half per cent. duties paid out of His Majesty's Leeward Islands for the last three years, with the charges thereupon."

This motion being agreed to,

Mr. Sheridan again rose, and moved "for a correct plan of the civil establishment and payments drawn in classes, and arranging by estimate the expense of each class, and of each office in each class, in manner directed by an act of the 21st of his present Majesty."

This was also agreed to, Mr. Sheridan having consented to leave out the word correct at the instance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

HAWKERS AND PEDLARS.

Mr. Pulteney moved for leave to bring in a bill to explain and amend so much of the act respecting the hawkers and pedlars as restrains them from exposing to sale goods in market towns, and as enables justices of the peace of any county to prohibit such hawkers and pedlars from vending their goods within the same, and to farther regulating their trade.—*Mr. Pitt declared he would not at present object to the bill; but he desired to put in his claim on behalf of the shopkeepers, who certainly ought to be considered as deeply interested in it.*

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that it was the first time the house had heard the right honorable gentleman confess, that the shop-tax was a burden on the shopkeepers. It had been repeatedly argued by different gentlemen, that the tax was a burden on the shopkeeper; but the right honorable gentleman had always contended, that it was the consumer, and not the shopkeeper, who bore it. If it was, as the right honorable gentleman had now confessed, a burden on the shopkeeper, it ought to be repealed; and if the consumer paid it, the hawkers and pedlars were hardly dealt with to be sacrificed for no purpose whatever. The right honorable gentleman had, by his late modification of the shop-tax, relieved all the country shopkeepers, excepting a few indeed, who dwelt in large towns. His consenting to relieve the hawkers and pedlars, would therefore aggravate the injustice done to the shopkeepers of the metropolis, on whose shoulders the *onus* of the burden now almost exclusively rested.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

APRIL 10.

REVENUE.

Mr. SHERIDAN moved for an account of the gross and neat receipt of the Exchequer on the quarter ending April 5, 1786, from the officers of

customs, excise, and stamps, He meant by the production of that account, to ground on it much future argument in proof of his objections to the state of the revenue, as insisted on by the right honorable gentleman; and though, perhaps the paper might not be ready by Wednesday, it might, nevertheless, be ready by the day on which the right honorable gentleman should open his budget, which would equally answer the purpose.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt informed the honorable gentleman, that he had himself made a motion a few days ago of nearly the same purport as that which had been read, but of a greater extent; and as the honorable gentleman's object was solely to compare the revenue in two different quarters, his was more effectual for that purpose, as, besides the accounts of the customs, excise, and stamps, he had in his motion included incidents, which together comprized the whole of the revenue, and therefore gave a fairer opportunity for an accurate comparison.

Mr. Sheridan answered, that being now told such a paper had been moved for, he would withdraw his motion. He afterwards moved for a variety of papers, all relative to the actual state of the revenue, which were severally agreed to.

APRIL 11.

CLAIMS OF AMERICAN LOYALISTS.

Mr. SHERIDAN signified his intention of moving for certain papers relative to the payments to American loyalists and sufferers, and to discharge the order of the preceding day, which he understood was not worded so as to comprehend the whole of his object. Undoubtedly, he at first designed to move certain resolutions relative to the state of the revenue upon the ensuing day, even under the disadvantage of not having the papers which he had moved for the preceding day; but having since understood, that before he came to the house on Monday, the right honorable gentleman had declared it to be his intention to put off (and had

actually put off) the report of his national-debt bill till after the holidays, he thought it better to take more time, as the greatest accuracy could not but be desirable in a matter which depended so much upon calculation and figures; and, therefore, he would either put off his intended motions till the first open day after the holidays; or till any day previous to the right honorable gentleman's opening his budget.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt said, his budget had been opened ten days before.

Mr. Sheridan's motion was then put as follows, and agreed to:—

“For an account of the whole claims given by the loyalists to the commissioners appointed to examine the said claims; and an account of the sum at which the said claims are liquidated; and, also, an account of the amount of the claims not yet heard and liquidated.”

APRIL 26.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

On the 4th of April, Mr. Burke, in his place, had charged Mr. Hastings with sundry high crimes and misdemeanors, and delivered at the table the nine first articles of his charges, and the rest in the*

*The following are the particulars of the charges:—

1. With gross injustice, cruelty, and treachery against the faith of nations, in hiring British soldiers for the purpose of extirpating the innocent and helpless people who inhabited the Rohillas.

2. With using the authority delegated to him through the East India Company, for treating the King, Shaw Allum, Emperor of Hindostan, or otherwise the Great Mogul, with the greatest cruelty, in bereaving him of considerable territory, and withholding forcibly that tribute of twenty-six lacks of rupees, which the company engaged to pay as an annual tribute or compensation for their holding in his name the Duannee of the rich and valuable provinces of Bengal, and Bahar, and Orissa.

3. With various instances of extortion, and other deeds of mal-administration, against the Rajah of Benares. This article consisted of three different parts, in each of which Mr. Hastings was

course of the following week, amounting, in all, to twenty-two in number. On the 26th Mr. Hastings requested, by petition to the house, to be permitted to be heard in his defence to the several articles; and that he might be allowed a copy of the same. Mr. Burke declared his wish that every reasonable degree of indulgence should be shewn Mr. Hastings; he should, therefore, readily consent to his being heard in his defence, though he did not think it quite agreeable to the regularity of their proceeding, that he should be heard in the present stage of it. With respect to a copy of the charges he believed there was no precedent of such an indulgence being granted. It was well known that it was his original intention to have gone through the whole of the evidence before he delivered in his articles, and to let the charge grow out of the evidence; but the house, in its wisdom, had thought proper to vote a different mode of proceeding, and to direct that the charges should be first made, and that he should then proceed to substantiate them by evidence. Hence he had

charged with a series of the most wanton oppressions and cruelties. He gave in papers concerning the rights of the Rajah, his expulsion, and the sundry revolutions which have been effected by the British influence, under the control of the late Governor-General in that Zemendary.

4. The numerous and insupportable hardships to which the royal family of Oude had been reduced, in consequence of their connection with the supreme council.

5. With having, by no less than six revolutions, brought the fertile and beautiful provinces of Farruckabad to a state of the most deplorable ruin.

6. With impoverishing and depopulating the whole country of Oude, and rendering that country, which was once a garden, an uninhabited desert.

7. With a wanton, an unjust, and pernicious exercise of his powers, and the great situation of trust which he occupied in India, in overturning the ancient establishments of the country, and extending an undue influence, by conniving at extravagant contracts, and appointing inordinate salaries.

8. With receiving money against the orders of the company, the act of parliament, and his own sacred engagements; and applying that money to purposes totally improper and unauthorised.

9. With having resigned by proxy, for the obvious purpose of retaining his situation, and denying the deed in person, in direct opposition to all those powers under which he acted.

10. Accuses him of treachery to Muzuffer Jung, who had been placed under his guardianship.

11. Charges him with enormous extravagance and bribery in various contracts, with a view to enrich his dependants and favourites.

These are the principal of the twenty-two charges, on most of which Mr. Hastings was voted by the house deserving of impeachment; the others are dependant on the foregoing.

been under the necessity of new arranging his plan, and of making his charges as comprehensive as possible, taking in and stating every thing with which private information could furnish him. In their present form they were to be considered merely as a general collection of accusatory facts, intermixed with a variety of collateral matter, both of fact and reasoning, necessary for their elucidation ; and the committee to which they were to be referred would necessarily find occasion to alter them materially. For this reason, also, he thought it would be highly improper to give a copy of them in the present stage of the business to Mr. Hastings. These reasons, however, being overruled by the majority, and a copy ordered to be granted to Mr. Hastings, Mr. Burke moved, that the house should resolve itself into a committee to examine the witnesses that had been ordered to attend. This was also objected to by the other side of the house, on the ground, that as they had agreed to hear the defence of Mr. Hastings, they ought to wait till that had been gone through, since he might possibly be able to offer such matter in exculpation of himself as would induce the house to stop all further proceedings. The house divided on Mr. Burke's proposition, ayes 80 ; noes 140 ; majority against it 60.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that the house had committed a sort of a blunder in their proceedings, in deciding that Mr. Hastings should be heard immediately ; and the right honorable gentleman had said, the charges must not stand in the present form. Was it then wise or proper to hear Mr. Hastings on what the other side of the house termed vague, confused, irrelevant, and unintelligible charges ? Or would it not have been better, more regular, and more sensible, first to have reduced the charges to the form in which they were to stand, and then have heard Mr. Hastings on them.

APRIL 28.

MR. POWYS'S MOTION FOR LEAVE TO BRING IN
A BILL TO EXPLAIN AND AMEND THE ACT OF
1776, COMMONLY CALLED THE QUEBEC BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN justified the motion and said, he wished for something like an answer to two or three questions from the right honorable gentleman, on which would depend whether it would be necessary

for him to trouble the house with a motion or not. By the gazette he saw that Sir Guy Carleton was appointed captain-general and governor in chief of the provinces of Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Was it meant that there were to be lieutenant-governors of the two latter provinces? and if it were, was it intended that appeals from the latter should be to the king in council at home, or to Sir Guy Carleton as governor and captain-general? Would not the appointment of Sir Guy Carleton as captain-general and commander-in-chief over the three provinces, disturb the present government of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and narrow their privileges and liberties? If these questions were answered, Mr. Sheridan said, it would be unnecessary for him to make any motion; if not, he should move for a copy of the appointment, powers, and instructions given to Sir Guy Carleton as captain-general and governor-in-chief of the provinces of Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.

The Attorney-General, in reply, stated, that there were to be Lieutenant-Governors but for a short time, and that these were to be the very persons now governors of the two subordinate provinces; at least he knew that, with respect to one, such a measure was in agitation.

MAY 4.

NATIONAL DEBT.

The order of the day having been read for going into a committee for the consideration of the report on the national debt bill, the question was put, "That the Speaker do now leave the chair,"

Mr. SHERIDAN rising, signified his determined resolution of moving to postpone the question till that day se'nnight; and if he should be so successful as to prevail on the house to agree to that proposition, he should then move certain resolutions grounded on facts, statements, and calculations to be found in the report of the committee appointed to inquire into the receipt and expenditure of the

public revenue, which resolutions he should read as part of his speech. A plan for paying off the public debt had been published by a noble earl (Stanhope) no longer a member of that house, and whose absence he had to lament upon that day. The noble earl's plan appeared to him by far the most preferable of the two compared with that of the right honorable gentleman's opposite to him, which was founded altogether on the report to which he had alluded. It was not, however, his purpose, at that time, to enter into any argument respecting the principles of the right honorable gentleman's bill, or to discuss the propriety of applying the surplus supposed to exist in the manner provided by that bill. What he meant to go to was, the examination of the great and important question, whether there actually existed any surplus at all or not? To that point he wished to draw their attention; and although he was well aware, that however interesting the subject was to the nation, it was not one of those in which that house took much delight, or to the discussion of which they were very fond of attending; yet the critical situation of the country, and the magnitude of the object in view considered, he hoped it would be thought entitled to their especial notice. The diminution of the public debt, and the gradual alleviation of the public burdens, were matters well worthy their deliberate attention. It was a duty they owed to their constituents, a duty they owed to themselves, to set about the business with zeal, with earnestness, and with a sincere desire to attain their aim with certainty and effect. In setting about such a business, however, plain dealing was first of all indispensably necessary; above all things, it behoved that house not to deceive themselves; to gloss over nothing; to avoid nothing that told against the desired purpose, but to convince the world not only of the strength and vigor of the national resources, but that the parliament had spirit and stoutness of mind enough, to dare to look

the real situation of the country in the face; to examine it thoroughly, and to hold it up publicly as it really was, without deception of any kind whatever.

Under this impression it was, and not with any despondent ideas of the national resources, that he meant to call their attention to the report on the table; and he conceived that he should be able to prove that it was drawn up upon erroneous principles; that it was replete with mistaken calculations; that the committee had acted under a delusion; and that the effect of the whole must be fallacious, and not to be relied on, as the ground of a proceeding of so serious and important a nature as a bill containing and enacting a plan for the gradually paying off the national debt. When he said this, he begged leave once for all to be understood, as not meaning to convey any imputation whatever on the gentlemen who composed the committee; they had acted, he was persuaded, on honorable principles, and had rather given way to delusion themselves than meant to deceive or mislead the house. But meaning as he did to object to the report, and to disprove its statements, he must take the liberty of declaring, that he thought the formation of the committee highly objectionable. The right honorable gentleman opposite to him had gone the length of avowing, that he should not be ashamed to deliver lists of his own friends to be ballotted for to form such a committee; and therefore he might be allowed to suppose, that some of the right honorable gentleman's influence was exerted in the selection and appointment of the gentlemen who were returned by the ballot, and who actually had been members of the late committee. Such a committee, so appointed and chosen, he thought extremely improper; because, as every part and party in the house, however they might differ as to the best means of paying off the national debt, were undoubtedly agreed in their opinion, that it ought to be set about as soon as possible, and commenced in

the manner most likely to effect it on the best and most advantageous terms for the public, he should have imagined, that on such an occasion, a fair and impartial committee, composed of men of different sentiments, and men who were as likely to draw out the dark side of the question as the light one, would have been the sort of committee best adapted to the occasion. Mr. Sheridan now proceeded to examine the committee's report, the favorite object of which appeared to him to be, to hold up the measures recently taken by the minister of the day for the prevention of smuggling, as the great and principal cause of the supposed increase of the public income. The committee, in the exordium of the report, say, "The large amount of the taxes proposed since the commencement of the late war, in addition to the then subsisting revenue; the difficulties under which the different branches of our commerce laboured during the continuance of that war; and the great and increasing prevalence of smuggling, previous to the measures recently adopted for its suppression, appeared to your committee to render any averages of the amount of the revenue in former periods in a great degree inapplicable to the present situation of the country."

The very reverse of this reasoning ought, in his mind, to have prevailed; and the committee would have done much more wisely to have stated the averages of the amount of the revenue, and of the expenditure of it in former periods, because, as the report stood, there appeared a statement of the present receipt, to which was opposed not the present expenditure, but the expenditure that it was supposed would be the expenditure of the year 1791. Where, Mr. Sheridan asked, was the difficulty, since peace was no new situation to this country? The mode of stating the present receipt, which happened to be remarkably high and favourable, against the probable expenditure of a year at so great a distance, was a mode directly contrary to that ever be-

fore resorted to, as the best means of getting at the true situation of the country, and the reverse of what had been the conduct of a near relation of the president of the committee (Mr. Grenville) who, as an honorable baronet (Sir Grey Cooper) on a late occasion had stated, at the close of the last war, came forward with a plan, in which he had expressly declared, that he did not think himself at liberty to take the receipt of the current year, as that was the year immediately after the conclusion of the peace, and in consequence a larger one than usual. He denied that the reasoning of the right honorable gentleman on the present produce of the revenue paid into the exchequer, had been just or correct; the mode of argument resorted to by a right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) to prove the increasing receipt, had been, by comparing one quarter with another, and inferring, that in proportion to the excess of one quarter over another, so would be the excess of one year over another. That sort of argument he considered as weak and fallacious, and the last quarter's receipt proved it.

Of the excessive amount of our taxes and public debts, concerning which he might perhaps think rather singularly, he should not hesitate to declare, that such an immense burden was thereby imposed upon the country, that it became almost impossible for that house, on any occasion, to withhold the supplies. So much indeed was mortgaged to the public creditor, that it could scarcely be done without creating an alarm of a nature extremely injurious to the national credit; and therefore, if it was to do over again, he, for one, should oppose the entering into any bargain with the crown for the grant of a stipulated civil-list revenue, since that, added to the other circumstance, fettered that house in its votes, and in so much took away from their rights. If, therefore, the right honorable gentleman was correct in his plan, he was fighting not only for the re-

venue, but for the constitution of his country, which was certainly very laudable. Mr. Sheridan contradicted the favorite position of the committee, in their report, that the recent increase of the receipt of the revenue had been owing to the measures lately taken to prevent smuggling. He mentioned sugar and several others to prove this assertion; indeed he knew not how those measures could, in any respect, be said to have tended to the increase of the revenue, unless it was in the effect of the commutation tax; and so generally admitted at this time was the perniciousness of that measure, that he supposed they should hear some alteration of it proposed even during the present session, since no man need do more than look at the very sensible pamphlet written by Mr. Rous, to be convinced of the extravagance and absurdity of that tax; which tended to send such immense sums out of the country in a trade, which, in point of export, had before been greatly against us. Mr. Sheridan took notice also of the pamphlet of Mr. Baring, stiling him a man high in situation at the India-house, and who boasted in his writings that he enjoyed the confidence of ministers. Mr. Baring professed to be the advocate of the tax, but his arguments appeared to tell the other way, and that very forcibly; for what could be more self-evident, than that it was in the highest degree impolitic to encourage the import and use of a foreign luxury, the introduction of which was carried to such an extent, in consequence of the commutation tax, that, according to Mr. Baring's accounts, four millions of money would be wanted of the public to enable the company to carry on the trade. This, he believed, was an over-statement; as, doubtless, one million four hundred thousand pounds would do; but that sum the company must borrow of the Bank, and the public be the security, which was exactly the same as if they had lent it themselves. He objected to the statement of the produce of that tax, and said, that the committee had

taken credit for matters which could not be reckoned any more after they had been once received, as they would not be paid again.

Some false calculations had arisen also in respect to the game duties; the post-horse-tax receipt; glove-duty receipt; the duty on medicines; the shop tax; and the tax on attornies. Indeed, a considerable sum might be deducted from the total of their several amounts of produce; and so much ought to be taken from the calculated receipt in their report, because it had been erroneously assumed. The inefficacy of the glove tax, might prove the futility of every one of the same sort, which could never be made productive but by means so arbitrary that the house ought not to agree to them. At present, the glove duty was so generally evaded, that almost every man who purchased a pair of gloves, would consider it as a species of shoplifting to take the stamp out of the shop with him. The system of extending taxation by stamps, to such articles as the principle of a stamp duty would not apply to, was absurd in the extreme. Stamping law proceedings and other documents, was a good idea; the stamp gave a weight, a sanction, and authority, where so applied; but could that be said of gloves, or of all the trumpery of a perfumer's shop, to which they were now about to extend stamp duties. Would a stamp legalize pomatum, or give validity to lavender water? With regard to the proposed tax on hair powder, the right honorable gentleman had borrowed it from a noble friend of his (the Earl of Surrey) who had paid his contribution to it by suggesting and proposing the obnoxious tax. What a vast number of years had they to look forward, even so far as the year 1791, admitting that the committee had been founded in all their arguments, before the completion of their wonderful designs; the present members of the house would be departed, and their political existence terminated! They, the old grey-bearded

stewards, who had rack-rented the tenants, distrained their goods, and levied executions, would be then no more, but would have left the new parliament, like a young heir, to come into possession of a clear unincumbered estate. The committee had indeed taken their average, in respect to the article of malt. An honorable baronet (Sir Grey Cooper) had observed, that a great number of Exchequer bills were out, and that disadvantages would arise from that circumstance in case of any sudden emergency; adding, that when a noble lord (North) had only £1,800,000 out, he paid off £700,000 out of the number. To prove that the receipt would increase under the different heads or articles, it seemed sufficient to remark, that in every one of the reasonings a proviso was foisted in, and that in fact your "If," was your only surplus maker. With respect to the navy expenditures, the papers signed by an honorable Baronet (Sir Charles Middleton) was a voucher that seemed unwilling to speak the truth. He declared, that he thought £1,000,000 for the navy establishment, was putting it too low, even for a year of peace: he reminded the house, that our situation was different now from what it had been at the end of the war before the last: we could then rest in security with a much less naval force than was now necessary for our protection. The national glory and honor were at that day sufficient guards for the kingdom; now, alas! our situation was different; though our efforts had been wonderful during the war, still it was to be remembered, that we had proved unsuccessful; we required therefore a stronger navy than was before deemed necessary. When the system of fortification lately proposed was reprobated, the house would recollect, they were all agreed in the premises, that it was right to protect the dockyards, but they deemed the conclusion drawn from those premises to be false; and when it was proposed by the noble

duke at the head of the ordnance, to defend the dockyards by a newfangled mode, that mode was rejected, and it was determined to defend them in the old-fashioned vulgar way, by a strong navy. He at the time, and he believed many other gentlemen expected, that though they had refused the money asked for fortifications, some of it would be applied to strengthening our navy;—the navy estimate was too low for a peace establishment, the situation and circumstances of other states considered. Objectionable also was the idea of calling out but a third of the militia; and glaring the impolicy of disgusting the country gentlemen upon a subject with which they ought always to be kept in humour; as it was upon their taking commissions in the militia, that its respectability, its constitutional essence, and its true character depended.

France might assign an excellent reason for disbanding a part of her army; strengthened by alliance, she might rest secure with a small military force; nay, the French ministers would be justified in advising their monarch considerably to reduce the navy, because they might well say, “Holland is connected with your majesty as an ally, and the navy of Holland is in effect your navy.” But far different was the case with us; we might almost be described to have but one foe, and that the whole world; whilst we were scarcely in alliance with our own empire. There were many expences which probably would come on the public before the year 1791, of which the committee had not taken the least notice in their report. Although the fortifications proposed had been rejected, yet every body knew, that some fortifications there must be. They consequently would cost something. Another expense was the civil list; for it was pretty generally understood, that His Majesty stood in need of the whole £900,000 for his own expenditure. It was idle, therefore, to shut their eyes against the neces-

sity of an increase; the establishment of the other branches of the royal family, particularly the establishment of Prince William, who could not be expected to live upon a captain's pay, and certain events which might take place in the family (if alliance with virtue and goodness were desirable) would prove that necessity. There was also another reason which he had mentioned once before, and that was, the increase of the income of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, which must be soon attended to. A third was a subject which he was sorry to see had so far changed its impression on their feelings, that though the bare mention of it used to call forth all their sensibility, it was now heard with the coldest indifference; he meant the American loyalists; men to whom the faith of parliament was solemnly pledged, and therefore men whose cause that house neither could nor ought to abandon. The house had recognised their pretensions to protection, by instituting a committee to inquire into their claims, the amount of which was considerable, and must be defrayed. These additions to the expenditure, added to various others, amounted to £4,000,000, to pay which, he saw nothing in the report but army savings that could be depended on. As to lotteries, which were represented as the boasted means of resource, these were, in his mind, the most profligate and pernicious, and at the same time the most disadvantageous means of raising money which could be resorted to. With regard to the public accountants paying in their balances, he imagined there was not any great sum to be gained that way;—at least the right honorable gentleman must be aware, that there was also money to be paid back again by the Exchequer, so that probably the balance between the two could not be very large.

The idea of the unclaimed dividends at the Bank, the house would recollect, had been treated with derision in a former debate, and were not to be

counted upon; and as to the crown lands, they ought not, in his opinion, to be regulated or disposed of without the especial consent of the Prince of Wales. With respect to insuring the due collection of taxes, that was a fair object, if fairly managed. But he had heard of some regulations to be proposed relating to a particular branch of commerce, which were so arbitrary and despotic, that if they passed, the revenue might be said to make war against the constitution. And what were the means whereby the sum wanted to commence the plan with was to be had? At present it was clear there was no surplus; and the only means which suggested themselves to him were, a loan of a million for the especial purpose; for the right honorable gentleman might say with the person in the comedy, "If you won't lend me the money, how can I pay you?" To those means perhaps it would be best to resort; but certain he was, that was no reply to the report on the table; and to proceed with a bill founded upon such fallacious principles and such enormous reasoning, would be the height of rashness and presumption;—it would be trusting too much to chance; and would ill become that house to countenance such conduct if the right honorable gentleman were himself imprudent enough to risque it. If he did, he would act like a school-boy, who, for the sake of getting at fruit, grasped at the first branch he could reach, and not only pulled down the unripe fruit, but destroyed also the blossom, the bud, and the bough,—the hopes of a future crop.

Mr. Sheridan having thus finished his argument upon the report, produced a string of resolutions which, he said, asserted undeniable facts, and therefore could not be negatived. If, however, any gentleman should move the order of the day upon them, he would move them again during the course of the ensuing day.

The Right Honorable W. W. Grenville observed that from a conviction that the propositions would prove groundless, he should meet

them with a determined negative. He could not follow the honorable gentleman through the whole of every part of his argument, nor could he pretend to enliven his speech with turns of wit and pleasantry; he had not the talents which the honorable gentleman so happily possessed, of making even a dull subject entertaining.—Mr. Sheridan suffered the motion to go without a division. The house then resolved itself into a committee,—after some conversation the bill was gone through, and the house being resumed, the report was ordered to be received to-morrow.

Mr. Sheridan now moved, “That the expected annual amount of the national income, stated in the report of the secret committee, appointed to inquire into the public income and expenditure, appears in no respect to have been calculated upon the average receipts of the number of years, but is estimated upon the produce of one year only, and fixed at the amount of the same, with the addition of the probable increase upon the new taxes.”

“That it appears that the account of the annual expenditure, as opposed to the amount of the public income so calculated, is not a statement of the present existing expenditure, or of that which must exist for some years to come, but is formed from the probable reductions which it is alleged will have taken place towards the end of the year 1791, in the prospect of a permanent peace.”

“That the different branches of revenue, in the period upon which the future is calculated, appear to have been singularly productive, particularly in the customs; and greatly to have exceeded the amount of the preceding year, with which alone it is contrasted.

“That it does not appear that any means were taken, nor information called for, nor any examination entered into by the said committee, in order to ascertain whether such increase of revenue had arisen from causes which were likely to have a permanent operation or otherwise.

“That such an investigation is indispensably necessary before this house can, with confidence, cal-

culate, by the produce of one year, the supposed future amount of the public income."

"That the uncertainty of estimating by such a criterion, the expected future produce of the revenue, is still more evident, upon a comparison of the quarter, ending the 5th of April last, with the same quarter in the preceding year, upon which the future income is calculated; by which comparison it appears that the amount of the latter quarter is inferior in the sum of £188,215 13s. 4d. in the branch of the customs, to the former."

"That in the said report there are certain articles of receipt erroneously stated, as proper to be added to the future annual income, and other articles of expense erroneously omitted to be added to the expenditure."

"That the sum voted, and to be voted, for the service of the year 1786, including the interest and charges of the public debt, considerably exceeds the sum of £15,397,471.

"That the means by which the deficiency is to be made good, arise from aids and debts which belong to the present year only."

"That there is no surplus income whatever applicable to the reduction of the public debt now existing."

"That a surplus of income in the ensuing quarter can arise only by the renewal of a loan for an extraordinary million, borrowed upon exchequer bills in the last, and charged upon the supply of the present year; and which loan it would be unnecessary to make but for the purpose of procuring the said surplus."

"That any extraordinary increase of exchequer bills, contrary to former practice in time of peace, is an expedient in anticipation of that assistance which the government might receive in the case of any circumstance rendering it necessary to strengthen the state of our national preparation."

“ That the saving to the public upon the interest of money borrowed in this way is rendered improbable or precarious by the necessity which will arise for the more speedy issuing such bills, in order that the object for which the loan is made may be punctually and effectually answered, nor even, should such saving accrue, will it compensate for the disadvantage above stated.”

“ That admitting that, by the foregoing means, the expected surplus will arise upon the three quarters next ensuing, and that thenceforward one million annually is to be applied to the reduction of the debt, it appears that there will then be an interval of nearly four years before the commencement of that permanent peace establishment, which is to furnish, in the reduction of its services £900,000 of the expected million surplus.”

“ That in this period it appears from the vouchers annexed to the said report, and other papers before this house, that a sum, amounting to £4,010,000, besides two millions due to the bank, making, together, the sum of £6,010,000 will be deficient and wanting, over and above the stated annual income.”

“ That for this sum of £60,000 there appears to be no adequate provision or resource.”

The motions were negatived.

MAY 8.

NATIONAL DEBT.

The report of the committee on the bill for establishing a fund to be unalienably applied in the distribution of the national debt, being brought up, the amendments were severally read and agreed to; and when that part of the bill was read, in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer's clause, obliging the commissioners, when the stocks were at or above par, to come to parliament for new powers, was read, Mr. Pitt moved “ to defer the further consideration of it to the ensuing day.” Before the Speaker put the question,

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that he had not happened

to be present on Friday last, but he understood the right honorable gentleman had alluded to the subject of that bill, upon which he had presumed to take up so much of the time of the house the preceding day; and had deemed his arguments and calculations fallacious and ill founded. It would, he thought, have been more fair for the right honorable gentleman to have answered those arguments, and proved the calculations fallacious and ill founded on the preceding day, when he was present, than thus to have glanced at either, and spoken of them injuriously in his absence. If it was conceived that the right honorable gentleman, who had on the preceding Thursday spoken immediately after him, had answered his arguments, and that speech was relied on as a full and complete answer and refutation of what he had advanced, he was perfectly content to leave it to the good sense and feeling of the house to decide, whether he had been refuted or not. But, as the right honorable gentleman in question, for whose ability and character, in every point of view, he entertained a very sincere respect, had professed that he did not mean to go into his arguments at large, or to follow him through the whole of them, as the great point to which he had aimed at calling their attention, the point of ascertaining whether there was actually any surplus or not—but declared he should leave that part of the task to other honorable gentlemen of greater abilities, and more brilliant and splendid talents, from whom the house would hear a full and complete answer; and the house had heard no answer at all from those honorable gentlemen of greater abilities and more splendid talents; he, Mr. Sheridan, felt himself warranted in declaring, that his remarks upon the subject were well grounded, and had not been invalidated by any argument whatever.

Mr. Pitt, in reply, claimed from Mr. Sheridan "the performance of that pledge which he had explicitly made to the house, of giving every support in his power to the measure, proposed for promoting the national prosperity."

Mr. Sheridan denied the right of any one member to take upon himself to pledge another to a particular line of conduct respecting measures subsequently to be brought forward, without leaving him the reserve of exercising his own judgment upon the expediency and propriety of those measures as applied to the purpose in view when they should be proposed ; and said, that although he, and he believed every other gentleman, agreed completely with the right honorable gentleman, as to the desirableness of diminishing the national debt ; yet, he must maintain, that it behoved that house to watch the steps taken for that end with the more vigilance and closeness.

The farther consideration of the report was adjourned to the ensuing Thursday.

MAY 22.

TAX BILLS.

Mr. SHERIDAN, adverting to his intended motion for the printing of tax bills, said, that although the subject was of a novel nature, yet he would be as brief as possible. He was convinced that every person would readily coincide with him in opinion, that there were no bills of more importance than the tax bills. They ought, undoubtedly, to be well understood before they were passed ; and no mode could be more eligible for diffusing the information, than the printing of every tax bill previous to its final discussion. The practice of printing bills was of modern date, as might be seen from the perusal of Mr. Hatsel's Precedents of the House of Commons, which he believed to be in possession of every gentleman conversant in parliamentary business. This custom, however, had not yet extended to tax bills ; and he could not conceive any reason for the exception, unless it were the nugatory inference from the mere want of custom. He entertained a

very high respect for the usage of parliament; but he thought that a custom, which was not justified by any solid arguments, ought to be renounced. As the printing of the tax bills would be attended with the happiest effects, he hoped no gentleman would oppose a measure of such general utility to the country. He should always be an advocate for a rigid adherence to the customs of parliament; but any usage or regulations founded on absurdity, he would never countenance. He applauded the parliamentary maxim of not admitting petitions against a tax bill, during the same session in which the law was passed. If such a law were not enforced, there would otherwise arise very unnecessary delays.—The motion which he now meant to submit to the house had no tendency of the kind; and what it was designed to remedy, was not justified by any order of the house, but only by practice. As taxation had now increased to a very great degree, it was found expedient to invest justices of the peace with more extensive powers than they had hitherto possessed. The blunders and confusion which had ensued from the multiplication of the laws within these two years, had been attended with much injury to the revenue, and with much inconvenience and molestation to the subjects. It was, therefore, by no means strange, if those wise-heads, often called justices of the peace, were puzzled in endeavoring to expound the nature of the new regulations. Parliament should, in consequence of these defects, adopt some mode of affording gentlemen an opportunity to consider the minutiae of the new acts. He was astonished how the clerks could form an index from such imperfect materials. As the Journals had undergone such various and complicated alterations he imagined that a discovery of a real reference in the index might be ranked among the marvellous. No reference could be made to the original act, unless the index were worded in this manner—“An act to repeal an act, to alter an act, to explain

and amend an act," &c. This system had the appearance of naval architecture, by first laying the keel, then forming the ribs, then the rigging and other appurtenances; but what was remarkable, the ship at last was obliged to put to sea without a rudder! He then mentioned some supposed deficiencies in the horse, stamp, and window acts;—and said, that the wording of some conveyed the idea of the horses, not only inhabiting the houses, but the extraordinary circumstance of their looking out of the windows. He then condemned the proposed tax on perfumery; and, enumerating the articles of lavender, milk of roses, &c. said that the commissioners, in distinguishing the various particulars of taxation, must be gifted by nature with the noses of pointers; and then, alluding to parliament, quoted the following passage from Pope's *Rape of the Lock*:

“ Our humble province is to tend the fair,
Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care;
To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd essences exhale.”

He concluded by moving, that the bill relative to a tax on perfumery, be printed.

The motion was opposed by Mr. Rose and Mr. Pitt. The house divided; ayes 24; noes 119.

MAY 25.

WHALE FISHERY.

Upon bringing up the report from the committee on this bill,

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that the right honorable gentleman, who had proposed a reduction of the bounties to those concerned in the whale fisheries, had not proceeded upon true parliamentary principles. For, to say nothing of the injury about to be committed against the trading part of the kingdom, he could not conceive the parliamentary

grounds for relinquishing a measure one session and resuming the consideration of it the next.

Mr. Jenkinson replied, that in certain cases the regulations alluded to by the honorable gentleman were very proper. In tax bills, for instance, a measure was seldom or ever resumed which had been abandoned in the former session; but here the case was very different, and the honorable gentleman had mistaken the real grounds of opposition.

JUNE 8.

MILITIA BILL.

The report of the committee having been brought up by Mr. Young, the amendments were read separately, and a separate question put upon each; when the house came to the clause which limited the number of the militia to be called out, trained, and exercised to two-thirds of the whole. This was objected to by Mr. Marsham, and supported by Mr. Pitt.

Mr. SHERIDAN declared, that he could not resist that opportunity of expressing his surprise and regret, that the right hon. gentleman had thought proper to give way on the present occasion. He stated the consideration due to the gentlemen who had so laudably stood forward as friends of the militia, and urged the little regard that the difference of the expense deserved; when, in fact, the difference was so mere a trifle between calling out two-thirds of the militia annually, and calling out the whole.

The house divided; ayes (for the amendment, as it stood, for two-thirds of the militia) 49; noes 13. The bill was here ordered to be engrossed, with the amendment.

JUNE 9.

PETITION OF THE EAST-INDIA COMPANY.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that it was highly reprehensible to introduce at so late a period of the session great and important matters which required deliberate discussion; and particularly culpable indeed was the negligent way in which they were

opened by the right honorable gentleman, as if they were of little consequence, and fit to be considered only as matters of course. Mr. Sheridan proceeded to prove, that the necessity for the present application must have been known early in the session; and that the Directors had no manner of occasion to have waited under the expectation of receiving additional information by the last ships from India. He stated the grounds upon which he formed these opinions, and entered into an examination and discussion of several parts of the report of the situation of the East-India Company's affairs which had been laid on the table. He asserted, that the calculations were most erroneous; the deductions false; and the result of the whole of such as he had touched upon, consequently fallacious. The commutation tax had failed so greatly in point of productiveness, that instead of the many hundred thousand pounds which the public were led to believe they should receive for what they paid so dearly for, it had only produced one hundred thousand pounds compensation; and great part of that was extremely disputable, whether it was to be ascribed to the operation of that tax, or to any other effect, which he had taught the public to entertain respecting it.

Mr. Pitt answered, that Mr. Sheridan had greatly misconceived the report, and declared, that from having combated a report brought in by Mr. Grenville, with some success, he seemed to be of opinion, that any report might be handled with equal dexterity; but he had shewn the reverse to be the fact. Mr. Pitt appealed to the house, whether the commutation tax had not proved gloriously successful. As the honorable gentleman had not offered any objection to the motion, but had gone into a detail of matters totally foreign to it, it was unnecessary to detain the house with a long argument in reply.

Mr. Sheridan contended, that the right honorable gentleman not only misconceived, but grossly mis-stated his reasoning; a circumstance which he imputed altogether to the right honorable gentleman's want of capacity on such subjects. The right

honorable gentleman's boasting of the commutation tax, and looking round him, and appealing to a few of his own friends for support in his assertion, was no proof of the success of it, or the feeling of the public respecting it. Let him ask the country, let him inquire without those walls, (where he was sure of his majority) let him appeal to the people at large, and ascertain their sense of it, and he would then learn that its unpopularity was equal to its failure in point of produce !

The resolutions were agreed to without a division.

JUNE 12.

PETITION OF THE EAST-INDIA COMPANY.

The report of the two resolutions in the committee of supply, in consequence of the East-India Company's petition, was brought up by Mr. Rose; and the resolutions, after having been read a first and second time, were agreed to.

Mr. SHERIDAN remaked, that as occasions might, more than once, arise for the investigation of the subject of the two resolutions just read and agreed to by the house, he would not take up their time by going into it at that moment; but the more he examined the matter, the more fully he was convinced of the fallacy and error of the report upon which the Directors of the East-India Company had presumed to apply to that house for the assistance which they had desired. Mr. Sheridan stated some of the particulars, in which he differed altogether from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. One of them was, with regard to the sum sent from Bengal to China, in the course of the past year, which amounted to no more than 8000*l.* although he said, the right honorable gentleman had conceived that it amounted to 275,000*l.* He said, that he had a motion to make for a paper, to the production of which he conceived the right honorable gentleman could have no sort of objection, as it would give the house a degree of in-

formation respecting the business which they much wanted. Mr. Sheridan concluded with moving, "that there be laid before this house, extracts of all letters received by the court of directors of the East-India Company, since the 1st of January last, relating to the probable future amount of the net surplus revenues of the company's possessions in India; and also of all letters relating to the amount of sums which may probably be remitted, on the company's account, from India to China, in the next four years."

Agreed to.

JUNE 21.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

* *Mr. Hastings on the 1st of May, having been called to the bar, addressed himself in a short speech; in which he stated, that he considered his being allowed to be heard in that stage of the business as a very great indulgence, for which he begged leave to make his most grateful acknowledgments to the house; and as his wish was to deliver what he had to say in answer to the charges that had been presented against him by an honorable member, with a greater share of accuracy and correctness than he could pretend to in a speech from memory, he had committed his sentiments to writing, and hoped to be permitted to read them. This request being granted, Mr. Hastings proceeded to read his defence, in which he was assisted by Mr. Markham and the clerks of the house. Three days were spent in going through the several parts of his defence, and it was afterwards at the request of Mr. Hastings ordered to be laid upon the table of the house, and printed for the use of the members. The house in a committee next proceeded in the examination of witnesses in proof of the charges; and on the 1st of June, Mr. Burke brought forward the Rohilla charge, and moved the following resolution thereupon. "That the committee having considered the said article, and examined evidence on the same, are of opinion that there are grounds sufficient to charge Warren Hastings with high crimes and misdemeanors upon the matter of the said article." After much discussion, the debate was adjourned at half-past 3 o'clock, and renewed the day following. At half-past seven the committee divided, when there appeared for the motion 67: against it 119.*

On the 13th of June, Mr. Fox brought forward the charge respecting the Rajah of Beuares. It was carried by a majority of

* Abstract of proceedings, continued from that under the head of April 26.

119 to 79: "that there was matter of impeachment against Warren Hastings contained in the said charge. The Chancellor of the Exchequer concurred in this vote, but upon very narrow grounds. He thought the demands made upon the Rajah went beyond the exigence of the case, and that Mr. Hastings had pushed the exercise of the arbitrary discretion intrusted to him beyond the necessity of the service. The conduct of the minister on this occasion, drew upon him much calumny from the friends of Mr. Hastings. They did not hesitate to accuse him out of doors both publicly and privately of treachery. They declared it was in the full confidence of his protection and support that they had urged on Mr. Burke to bring forward his charges; and that the gentleman accused, had been persuaded to come to their bar with an hasty and premature defence; and they did not scruple to attribute this conduct in the minister to motives of the basest jealousy.

On the 21st of June, Mr. Hamilton moved, "that the house should be called over on the morrow fortnight." This step he considered as the only means of enforcing a full attendance, with a view to go on with the charges against Mr. Hastings, so as to completely finish them in the course of this session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Dempster.

Mr. SHERIDAN stated his reasons why he should give it his negative, being persuaded, notwithstanding the honorable gentleman's dauntless determination to bear all the odium and unpopularity of it, that whoever did support it, would find some share of the odium incurred by calling gentlemen back to town, after they had gone into the country and made their arrangements for the summer, fall upon them. Mr. Sheridan then begged leave to justify his absent friend, which he would do, he said, by stating what his meaning was, in order to shew, that he had not pledged himself to second a motion for a call, unless it could be made to appear that the call would be effectual. Mr. Sheridan here repeated that part of the argument of Mr. Fox on Friday, in which that gentleman had declared, that it would be a most desirable thing to go through the whole of the charges that session, if it were practicable to obtain such an attendance as ought to be present in the discussion of matters of such infinite importance; and if that could be made to appear to be likely, he should then have no objection to support a call of the house, or to any other means of enforcing it. He

appealed to the house, whether this was a pledge to support a motion for a call, before it was made to appear probable, that a call would be effectually obeyed? A word had fallen from the honorable gentleman which required some notice. Perhaps the honorable gentleman had used it accidentally, and without meaning to convey any improper insinuation by it. If he had, he would be so good as to say as much. But if he really meant it in its ordinary sense, he believed the house would agree with him, that pending an inquiry before parliament into the public conduct of Mr. Hastings, it was not very decent language, nor language that would be endured within those walls, especially after the vote the house had so recently come to upon the subject. The honorable gentleman had said, he stood up in behalf of a *persecuted* and *accused* man. That Mr. Hastings was an accused man, was true, but in what was he a *persecuted* man? He would not endeavor to argue that he was not persecuted, because if the honorable gentleman alluded to the vote on the charge relative to Benares, he sat near several of Mr. Hasting's persecutors, who could much better justify their vote, than it would become him to attempt to do for them. Neither the cause of substantial justice, the reasonable claims of Mr. Hastings, nor the dignity and character of the house, would be better served and satisfied, by going on with the charges without interruption, than by postponing the remainder of them till the next session. On the contrary, he contended that they would all of them be far less satisfied. He observed in the first place, that it was necessary not only to have a full attendance, but also that gentlemen should attend with that sort of temper which would qualify them for seriously discussing and solemnly deliberating on the important facts submitted to their consideration. Did the house imagine either whether the call was enforced or not, that gentlemen would after that day attend in numbers or with a determi-

nation to apply their minds closely to the subject? On the contrary, was it likely, if they proceeded any farther, that they should divide more than one hundred and twenty, or one hundred and fifty on any one of the remaining charges? He asked whether any gentleman present would say, that it would be right and decent to go on in that manner, with not a third part of the house present? Would it not expose them to the advantage taken already more than once by an honorable gentleman opposite to him (Major Scott) in respect to the admirable code of principles for the government of India, laid down in the resolutions moved by the right honorable and learned gentleman, so greatly to his own honor, in 1782? What had been the honorable gentleman's (Major Scott's) argument in respect to those resolutions, but a repeated declaration that they had been moved and voted in a thin house? If they proceeded therefore with the rest of the charges, and more of them should be voted, they would next session, in all probability, hear that they had been voted in a thin house. The honorable gentleman on Friday last, had taken a new ground of argument to urge the house to proceed with the remainder of the charges. He had positively declared his belief, that the fate of India depended on finishing them this year, and *that* declaration he had rested entirely on dark hints and suggestions, as if recent advices had been received from India, which justified such an opinion. Perhaps, as that honorable gentleman was more in the way of knowing the secrets of India than he was, he knew of some news that had arrived which justified him in his assertion. If so, it would be well for him to state it to the house; but, till he made out a case, and it behoved him to make out a strong one, to prove the fact, that the fate of India did depend on finishing the charges that session, all insinuation of that kind must go for nothing. For *his* part, Mr. Sheridan said, he had made every possible enquiry in order to learn

whether any extraordinary news had recently arrived from India; and he could hear of nothing extraordinary, but of the receipt of an extraordinary large diamond, said to have been sent to Mr. Hastings, and presented to His Majesty at an extraordinary and critical period of time. It was also a little extraordinary, that Mr. Hastings should be chosen as the person to present this diamond, after the resolutions of 1782 had reached India; especially if, as had been predicted, they had been translated into Persic and all the languages of the East.—With regard to any expectation on the part of Mr. Hastings, or any claim that he could be supposed to have upon the house, he could have none but that the house would continue, as they had begun, solemnly and seriously to investigate his conduct; and after having in due time gone through the charges, come to some ultimate decision upon the whole. Early in the commencement of the session, the right honorable Mr. Chancellor Pitt had himself declared, and he doubted not he would recollect it, “that it would be exceedingly misbecoming in the house either to continue hearing the charges when a full attendance could not be obtained, or to leave off without first moving a bill to hang up the enquiry, as it were, till the next session,—then to be resumed and pursued to its conclusion.” At the time of the right honorable gentleman’s stating that idea, the honorable gentleman opposite to him (Major Scott) had not offered a word of objection; much less had he said, that the fate of India depended on their being gone through this session; or that it would be injustice if they were not. In point of character, Mr. Hastings, he *must* contend, had no sort of right to complain that he had been injured by the proceedings hitherto; because no person could assert that they were the first arraignments of the character of Mr. Hastings in the house of commons. That gentleman’s character and conduct as governor-general of India had been before

arraigned in that house. It stood arraigned upon the journals, in the resolutions moved by the right honorable and learned gentleman in 1782; wherein every misdemeanor contained in the charges was generally imputed to that gentleman, in the most strong and pointed terms. With regard to the character and dignity of that house, the best way to support both, was to act evenly and consistently. They had hitherto proceeded deliberately, and in full houses, to discuss and decide upon the charges; and had made a much farther progress than many gentlemen had, at the beginning, imagined it possible for them to do. No delay but what was unavoidable could be imputed to the house; nor could any be imputed to his right honorable friend near him (Mr. Burke); since the house could not but have observed, that when the witnesses were under examination, his right honorable friend curtailed it as much as possible, and omitted many questions that he intended to have asked, merely to avoid every appearance of a wish to procrastinate. Every possible dispatch had been used;—they had proceeded a considerable way;—and it had been originally understood, that when they found it difficult to procure full attendances, the business was to be hung up till the next session. In the course of his speech, he put it to Major Scott, whether if all the rest of his charges were voted, and Mr. Hastings impeached, he was not of opinion that India would be lost? (*The Major shook his head.*) If he did not think so, he hoped he should hear no more of the bad consequences which would follow in India, if in the discussion of any other charges the house was urged to vote them.

On a division, the numbers were ayes for the call 30; noes 99.

JUNE 26.

EAST INDIA BILL.

The report of the committee on the East India Bill having been brought up, the amendments were read a first time; and on the question that these amendments be agreed to,

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that after the confident manner in which the right honorable and learned gentleman opposite him had declared he would satisfy the house, that the objections taken to the bill were ill-founded, and the doubts entertained of the truth and correctness of the report of the East India Directors, of the state of their affairs, groundless; he did not expect that the learned and right honorable gentleman would have waited for his rising, instead of rising himself, and giving the house the necessary information; without obliging him to restate those objections, and re-assert those doubts he had expressed on a former day. Having made this exordium, Mr. Sheridan proceeded to argue upon the report, and upon the papers, for which he had moved, and which had been printed. The more he examined the subject the more reason he had to complain of its having been delayed to so late a period of the session;—a delay which he had no manner of doubt was contrived on purpose to prevent discussion, and elude the detection of those fallacies on which the bill was grounded. In order to shew that the delay had been altogether unnecessary, he read extracts from the accounts in his hands, particularly from the Bengal letter to the directors; whence it appeared that no additional information on the leading and essential points had been received from Bengal since the first of January; and consequently that most of the statements in the directors' report, though roundly given, were mere assumptions and speculations, founded on no authentic accounts whatsoever. He next entered into an investigation of the two great questions

in dispute between him and Mr. Dundas, viz. the quantity or amount of the remittance to China, furnished from Bengal, and the amount of the surplus revenues of Bengal. He referred to an infinite variety of statements in different accounts before the house as evidence, that although it had in former debate been contended that India furnished a remittance to China to the amount of two hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds, that not more than six or seven thousand pounds appeared to have been furnished. Having discussed this head of his argument much at large, he took up the other; and endeavored to prove that fourteen hundred thousand pounds was the full amount of the surplus of the revenue which could be expected from Bengal to go towards the investment, and towards the relief of the other presidencies. He quoted a pamphlet, which he stated to be of authority, as it came from the pen of a person rather a favorite authority with the right honorable and learned gentleman opposite him; and upon whose argument he was himself inclined to rely in the particulars to which it referred, although he did not agree with him in many others, not then under consideration. The pamphlet in question was written by Mr. Hastings, and suppressed by him upon better recollection. The extract stated, that the drains of Bengal ought always to be allowed for, and that the utmost surplus revenue that could be expected from Bengal was a crore of rupees, or one million of money. Mr. Sheridan dwelt for a considerable time on this point; and opposed the authority of Mr. Hastings respecting it to the arguments used by Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas upon the subject in former debates. He also said, that he expected to hear no more from the former of these gentlemen respecting the two hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds sent from India to China, unless he meant positively to contradict the papers which had been printed, and which had been presented from the India House, in

conformity to his motion. In the course of his speech, Mr. Sheridan argued upon the immense quantity of bills drawn from India upon the company at home; declaring, that in ten years time bills to the amount of twelve millions would be due. He asked whether the Lords of the Treasury, in permitting bills to so large an amount, and which were to be outstanding till so distant a period, did not pledge that house to renew the company's charter, when it should next expire? He reasoned upon the probable effect of such a load of debt; and contended that it must prove ruinous to the company. After a great deal of calculation, reasoning, and remarks, on the two principal heads above stated, Mr. Sheridan took notice of the declaration made by Mr. Dundas in a late debate, that the public were not pledged as a security for the money borrowed by the East-India Company; and said, that if the fact were so, it could not be too well understood. He should therefore move the insertion of a clause, expressly declaring, that neither the present bill, nor any preceding bill, relative to the company, which had passed the house, pledged the public in any way whatsoever. Before he concluded, he said, he felt himself authorised by the papers which he held in his hand, to declare, that the report of the directors of the state of the company's affairs, was equally fallacious with the state of their affairs presented to that house in 1784, the errors of which the directors themselves had now confessed. Thus, in fact, so far from the company's affairs in India wearing a promising aspect, they wore a most alarming one. They appeared to be rapidly verging to a state of bankruptcy; and were already so deeply involved, that the relief now proposed was merely tampering with their disorder, and by no means an adequate and effectual cure. Mr. Sheridan now moved his clause.

Mr. Dundas replied at great length to these arguments.

Mr. Sheridan concluded by stating, that from the vigour and length of the defence, he drew the inference that the right honorable and learned gentleman was convinced of the weakness of the side of the argument which he was under the necessity of maintaining; and the more particularly was induced to draw this inference, from the frequent aids which he saw administered, while the right honorable and learned gentleman was upon his legs. He had received a hint from one friend in a whisper, and a *viva voce* instruction from a second, and he had been furnished with a written calculation and argument from a third; so that it was evident the principal of his friends were conscious he had a difficult task to sustain. Mr. Sheridan concluded with observing that as not one word had fallen from the right honorable and learned gentleman against the clause he had moved, he trusted it would meet with the concurrence of a majority.

The question was put on Mr. Sheridan's clause, and negatived without a division.

JANUARY 24, 1787.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

On the 23d of January His Majesty having opened the fourth session of the present parliament, no time was lost in bringing forward with all possible expedition the proceedings against Mr. Hastings. Mr. Burke on that day gave notice he should renew the proceedings on the 1st day of February following; and on the 24th of January, Mr. Sheridan made a motion on the subject.

Mr. SHERIDAN having prefaced his observations, by intimating to the house that he had heard, that, on the preceding Tuesday, when the necessity of attending to some business in the country had obliged him to delay his appearance in the execution of his parliamentary duty; notice had been given by a right honorable friend, that the charge relative to the Princesses of Oude would be brought forward on the ensuing Thursday; remarked, that he rose to

say, that having himself conceived, Monday se'n-night was the intended day, and having informed several members who were yet in the country, that the business would not be brought on before Monday se'nnight, he desired not to change the day, but to let the house understand, that on Tuesday next he wished to call Mr. Middleton to the bar, to explain a few points in his evidence, respecting which, as they stood at present, great doubts might arise;—and which doubts nothing but a few questions put to Mr. Middleton could clear up. His right honorable friend did not mean himself to interrogate Mr. Middleton, but the whole would rest on the few questions which he (Mr. Sheridan) thought it absolutely necessary to put to Mr. Middleton, which would not detain that gentleman at the bar above half an hour; and he should, on Monday se'nnight, be prepared to bring forward the business of the charge; but that no time would actually be lost by this mode of proceeding, as his right honorable friend would be ready to come forward with another charge on Thursday in the same week. Mr. Sheridan added, that if there was any serious objection to calling Mr. Middleton again to the bar, he would wave his motion for his attendance on Thursday; but as the questions which he wished to put to that gentleman were really important, and would take up but very little time, he hoped there would not be any obstacle. Under this idea, he should therefore beg leave to move, “That Nathaniel Middleton, Esquire do attend the committee of the whole house on India affairs on Thursday next.”

The question was put, and agreed to.

The 1st and 2d of February were spent in examining Mr. Middleton and Sir Elijah Impey. Mr. Pitt having expressed his apprehensions that it would be impossible for the evidence to be printed soon enough for the copies to be distributed on Monday, for the members to have them, so as to enable them to become masters of its tendency, and apply it to the charge, if the charge was that day debated; Mr. Sheridan agreed to postpone bringing forward the charge against the Begums till Wednesday.

FEBRUARY 7.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

The house having resolved itself into a committee of the whole house, Mr. St. John in the chair, on the fourth charge against Mr. Hastings, viz. the resumption of the Jaghires, and the confiscation of the treasures of the princesses of Oude.

The subject of this charge was particularly fitted for displaying all the pathetic powers of eloquence; and never were they displayed with greater skill, force, and elegance. For five hours and a half Mr. Sheridan commanded the universal attention and admiration of the house (which from the expectation of the day was uncommonly crowded), by an oration of almost unexampled excellence; uniting the most convincing closeness and accuracy of argument, with the most luminous precision and perspicuity of language; and alternately giving force and energy to truth, by solid and substantial reasoning; and enlightening the most extensive and involved subjects with the purest clearness of logic, and the brightest splendour of rhetoric. Every prejudice, every prepossession were gradually overcome by the force of this extraordinary combination of keen, but liberal, discrimination; of brilliant, yet argumentative wit. So fascinated were the auditors by his eloquence, that when Mr. Sheridan sat down, the whole house, the members, peers, and strangers, involuntarily joined in a tumult of applause, and adopted a mode of expressing their approbation, new and irregular in the house, by loudly and repeatedly clapping with their hands. Mr. Burke declared it to be the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit, united, of which there was any record or tradition. Mr. Fox said, "all that he had ever heard—all that he had ever read when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun." Mr. Pitt acknowledged, that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or modern times, and possessed every thing that genius or art could furnish, to agitate and control the human mind. The effects it produced were proportioned to its merits. After a considerable suspension of the debate, one of the friends of Mr. Hastings (Mr. Burgess) with some difficulty obtained, for a short time, a hearing; but finding the house too strongly affected by what they had heard to listen to him with favor, sat down again. Several members confessed they had come down strongly prepossessed in favor of the person accused, and imagined nothing less than a miracle could have wrought so entire a revolution in their sentiments. Others declared, that though they could not resist the conviction that flashed upon their minds, yet they wished to have leave to cool before they were called upon to vote; and though they were persuaded it would require another miracle to produce another change in their opinions, yet, for the sake of decorum, they thought it proper that the debate should be adjourned. Mr. Fox and Mr. A. Taylor strongly opposed this proposition; contending, that it was not less absurd

than unparliamentary to defer coming to a vote for no other reason that had been alleged than because the members were too firmly convinced; but Mr. Pitt concurring with the opinions of the former, the debate was adjourned a little after one o'clock.

SPEECH.

Mr. SHERIDAN commenced by observing that, had it been possible to have received, without a violation of the established rules of parliament, the paper* which the honorable member, Mr. Dempster, had just now read, he should willingly have receded from any forms of the house, for the purpose of obtaining new lights and farther illustrations on the important subject then before them; not, indeed, that, on the present occasion, he found himself so ill prepared, as merely, for this reason, to be prevented from proceeding to the discharge of his duty; neither, to speak freely, was he inclined to consider any explanatory additions to the evidence of Sir Elijah Impey so much framed to elucidate, as to perplex and contradict. Needless to his present purpose was it for him to require Sir Elijah, *legally*, to recognize what had been read, in *his* name, by the honorable gentleman. In fact, neither the informality of any subsisting evidence, nor the adducement of any new explanations from Sir Elijah Impey, could make the slightest impression upon the vast and strong body of proof which he should now bring forward against Warren Hastings. Yet, if any motive could have so far operated upon him, as to make him industriously seek for renewed opportunities of questioning Sir Elijah, it would result from his fresh and indignant recollection of the low and artful stratagem of delivering to the members, and others, in this last period of parliamentary inquiry, printed hand-bills of defence, the contents of which bespoke a presumptuous and empty boast of completely refuting all which, at any time, *had*, or even *could* be advanced against Mr. Hastings,

* A paper from Sir Elijah Impey, amending his evidence.

on the subject of the fourth article in the general charge of a right honorable member (Mr. Burke). But even this was far beneath his notice. The rectitude and strength of his cause were not to be prejudiced by such pitiful expedients ; and he should not waste a moment in counteracting measures, which, though insidious, were proportionately frivolous and unavailing. Nor would he take up the time of the committee with any general arguments to prove, that the subject of the charge, which had fallen to his lot to bring forward, was of great moment and magnitude. The attention which parliament had paid to the affairs of India, for many sessions past, the voluminous productions of their committees on that subject, the various proceedings in that house respecting it, their own strong and pointed resolutions, the repeated recommendation of His Majesty, and their reiterated assurances of paying due regard to those recommendations, as well as various acts of the legislature, were all of them undeniable proofs of the moment and magnitude of the consideration ; and incontrovertibly established this plain, broad fact, that parliament directly acknowledged that the British name and character had been dishonored, and rendered detested throughout India, by the malversation and crimes of the principal servant of the East India Company. That fact having been established beyond all question, by themselves, and by their own acts, there needed no argument, on his part, to induce the committee to see the importance of the subject about to be discussed that day, in a more striking point of view than they themselves had held it up to public observation. There were, he knew, persons without doors who affected to ridicule the idea of prosecuting Mr. Hastings ; and who not inconsistently redoubled their exertions, in proportion as the prosecution became more serious, to increase their sarcasms upon the subject, by asserting that parliament might be more usefully employed ; that there were matters of more immediate

moment to engage their attention ; that a commercial treaty with France had just been concluded ; that it was an object of a vast and comprehensive nature, and in itself sufficient to engross their attention. To all this he would oppose these questions. Was parliament mis-spending its time, by enquiring into the oppressions practised on millions of unfortunate persons in India, and endeavoring to bring the daring delinquent, who had had been guilty of the most flagrant acts of enormous tyranny and rapacious speculation, to exemplary and condign punishment ? Was it a misuse of their functions to be diligent in attempting, by the most effectual means, to wipe off the disgrace affixed to the British name in India, and to rescue the national character from lasting infamy ? Surely no man who felt for either the one or the other would think a business of greater moment, or magnitude, could occupy his attention ; or that the house could, with too much steadiness, too ardent a zeal, or too industrious a perseverance, pursue its object. Their conduct in this respect, during the course of the preceding year, had done them immortal honour, and proved to all the world, that however degenerate an example of Englishmen some of the British subjects had exhibited in India, the people of England collectively, speaking and acting by their representatives, felt, as men *should* feel on such an occasion, that they were anxious to do justice, by redressing injuries, and punishing offenders, however high their rank, however elevated their station.

Their indefatigable exertions in committees appointed to enquire concerning the affairs of India ; their numerous, elaborate, and clear reports ; their long and interesting debates ; their solemn addresses to the throne ; their rigorous legislative acts ; their marked detestation of that novel and base sophism in the principles of judicial enquiry (constantly the language of the Governor-General's *servile dependents* !), that crimes might be compounded ;

that the guilt of Mr. Hastings was to be balanced by his successes; that fortunate events were a full and complete set-off against a system of oppression, corruption, breach of faith, peculation, and treachery; and, finally, their solemn and awful judgment that, in the case of Benares, Mr. Hastings's conduct was a proper object of parliamentary impeachment; had covered them with applause, and brought them forward in the face of all the world, as the objects of perpetual admiration. Not less unquestionably just, than highly virtuous, was the assertion of the commons of Great Britain, that there were acts which no political necessity could warrant; and that amidst flagrancies of such an inexpressible description, was the treatment of *Cheit Sing*. To use the well-founded and emphatic language of a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt), the committee had discovered in the administration of Mr. Hastings, proceedings of strong injustice, of grinding oppression, and unprovoked severity. In this decision the committee had, also, vindicated the character of his right honorable friend (Mr. Burke), from the slanderous tongue of ignorance and perversion. They had, by their vote on that question, declared, that the man who brought the charges was no false accuser; that he was not moved by envy, by malice, nor by any unworthy motives to blacken a spotless name; but that he was the indefatigable, persevering, and, at length, successful champion of oppressed multitudes, against their tyrannical oppressor. With sound justice, with manly firmness, with unshaken integrity, had his right honorable friend, upon all occasions, resisted the timid policy of mere remedial acts—even the high opinion of Mr. Hastings's successor; even the admitted worth of Lord Cornwallis's character, had been deemed by his right honorable friend, an inadequate atonement to India for the injuries so heavily inflicted on that devoted country. Animated with the same zeal, the committee had, by that

memorable vote, given a solemn pledge of their farther intentions. They had audibly said to India—you shall no longer be seduced into temporary acquiescence, by sending out a titled Governor, or a set of vapouring resolutions.—It is not with stars, and ribands, and all the badges of regal favor, that we atone to you for past delinquencies. No—you shall have the solid consolation of seeing an end to your grievances, by an example of punishment for those that have already taken place. The house has set up a beacon, which, whilst it served to guide their own way, would also make their motions more conspicuous to the world which surrounded and beheld them. He had no doubt but in their manly determination, to go through the whole of the business with the same steadiness which gave such sterling brilliancy of character to their outset, they might challenge the world to observe and judge of them by the result. Impossible was it for such men to become improperly influenced by a paper, bearing the signature of Warren Hastings, and put, not many minutes before into *their* hand, as well as his own, on their entrance into the house. The insidious paper he felt himself at liberty to consider as a second defence, and a second answer to the charge he was about to bring forward; a charge replete with proof of criminality of the blackest dye,—of tyranny the most vile and premeditated,—of corruption the most open and shameless,—of oppression the most severe and grinding,—of cruelty the most hard and unparalleled. But he was far from meaning to rest the charge on assertion, or on any warm expressions which the impulse of wounded feelings might produce. He would establish every part of the charge, by the most unanswerable proof, and the most unquestionable evidence; and the witness whom he would bring forth to support every fact which he would state, should be, for the most part, one whom no man would venture to contradict—Warren Hastings himself. Yet, *this* character had

friends, nor were they blameable. They might believe him guiltless, because he asserted his integrity. Even the partial warmth of friendship, and the emotions of a good, admiring, and unsuspecting heart, might not only carry them to such lengths, but incite them to rise with an intrepid confidence in his vindication. Again (Mr. Sheridan added), would he repeat that the vote of the last session, wherein the conduct of this pillar of India, this corner-stone of our strength in the East, this talisman of the British territories in Asia, was censured, did the greatest honor to this house, as it must be the fore-runner of speedy justice on *that character*, which was said to be above censure, and whose conduct we were given to understand was not within the reach even of suspicion; but whose deeds were indeed such as no difficulties, no necessity could justify; for where is the situation, however elevated, and in that elevation however embarrassed, that can authorize the wilful commission of oppression and rapacity. If, at any period a point arose, on which enquiry had been full, deliberate, and dispassionate, it was the present. There were questions on which party conviction was supposed to be a matter of easy acquisition; and if this enquiry was to be considered merely as a matter of party, he should regard it as very trifling indeed; but he professed to GOD, that he felt in his own bosom the strongest personal conviction; and he was sensible that many other gentlemen did the same. It was on that conviction that he believed the conduct of Mr. Hastings, in regard to the Nabob of Oude and the Begums, comprehended every species of human offence.—He had proved himself guilty of rapacity at once violent and insatiable—of treachery, cool and pre-meditated—of oppression, useless and unprovoked—of breach of faith, unwarrantable and base—of cruelty, unmanly and unmerciful.—These were the crimes of which, in his soul and conscience, he arraigned Warren Hastings; and of which he had the

confidence to say he should convict him. As there were gentlemen ready to stand up his advocates, he challenged them to watch him—to watch if he advanced one inch of assertion for which he had not solid ground; for he trusted nothing to declamation.—He desired credit for no fact which he did not prove, and which he did not indeed demonstrate beyond the possibility of refutation. He should not desert the clear and invincible ground of truth, throughout any one particle of his allegations *against* Mr. Hastings, who uniformly aimed to govern India by his own arbitrary power, covering with misery upon misery a wretched people, whom providence had subjected to the dominion of this country; whilst in the *defence* of Mr. Hastings, not one single circumstance grounded upon truth was stated.—He would repeat the words, and gentlemen might take them down;—the attempt at vindication was false throughout. Mr. Sheridan now pursuing the *examination* of Mr. Hastings's defence, observed that there could not exist a single plea for maintaining that that defence against the particular charge now before the committee was hasty. Mr. Hastings had had sufficient time to make it up; and the committee saw that he had thought fit to go back as far as the year 1775, for pretended ground of justification, from the charge of violence and rapacity. Mr. Sheridan here read a variety of extracts from the defence, which stated the various steps taken by Mr. Bristow, in the years 1775 and 1776, to procure from the Begums aid to the Nabob. Not one of these facts, as stated by Mr. Hastings, was true. Groundless, nugatory, and insulting were the affirmations of Mr. Hastings, that the seizure of treasures from the Begums, and the exposition of their pilfered goods to public auction (unparalleled acts of open injustice, oppression, and inhumanity!) were in any degree to be defended by those encroachments on their property, which had taken place *previous* to *his* administration, or by those sales which

they themselves had solicited as a favorable mode of supplying a part of their aid to the Nabob. The relation of a series of plain, indisputable facts would irrecoverably overthrow a subterfuge so pitiful,—a distinction so ridiculous! It must be remembered, that, at that period, the Begums did not *merely desire*, but they *most expressly stipulated*, that of the thirty lacks promised, eleven should be paid in sundry articles of manufacture. Was it not obvious, therefore, that the sales of goods, in the first case, far from partaking of the nature of an act of plunder, became an extension of relief, of indulgence, and of accommodation? But, however, he would not be content, like Mr. Hastings, with barely making assertions, or, when made against his statement, with barely denying them; on the contrary, whenever he objected to a single statement, he would bring his refutation, and almost in every instance Mr. Hastings himself should be his witness. By the passages which he should beg leave to read, Mr. Hastings wished to insinuate, that a claim was set up, in the year 1775, to the treasure of the Begums, as belonging of right to the Nabob. Mr. Sheridan, from a variety of documents, chiefly from the minutes of the supreme council, of which Mr. Hastings had been the president, explained the true state of that question. Treasure, which was the source of all the cruelties, was the original pretence which Mr. Hastings had made to the Company for the proceeding; and through the whole of his conduct he had alleged the principles of Mahomedanism in mitigation of the severities he had sanctioned; as if he meant to insinuate that there was something in Mahomedanism which rendered it impious in a son not to plunder his mother. But to shew how the case precisely stood when Mr. Hastings began the attacks, Mr. Sheridan read the minutes of General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis, who severally spoke of a claim which had been made by the Nabob on the Bhow Begum,

in the year 1775, amounting to two one-half lacks. The opinion contained in those minutes was, that women were, on the death of their husbands, entitled by the Mahomedan law only to the property within the Zenana where they lived. This opinion was decisive—Mr. Bristow used no threats—no military execution or rigor were even menaced; the Begums complied with the requisition then made, and the disputed property then claimed was given up. After this, the farther treasure, namely, that which was within the Zenana, was confessedly her own—No fresh right was set up—no pretence was made of any kind to the residue—nay, a treaty was signed by the Nabob, and ratified by the resident, Mr. Bristow, that, on her paying thirty lacks, she should be freed from all farther application; and the Company were bound, by Mr. Bristow, to guarantee this treaty. Here then was the issue. After this treaty thus ratified, could there be an argument as to the right of the treasure of the Begums? And if the Mahomedan law had ever given a right, was not that right then concluded? To prove, however, the reliance which the Princesses of Oude had entertained, even in the year 1775, of receiving protection and support from the British government; an expectation so fatally disappointed in latter times, Mr. Sheridan read an extract of a letter from the Begum, the mother of the Nabob, to Mr. Hastings, received at Calcutta December 22, 1775, wherein she says, “If it is *your pleasure* that the mother of the late Nabob, myself, and his other women, and infant children, should be reduced to a state of dishonor and distress, we *must submit*; but if, on the contrary, you call to mind the friendship of the late blessed Nabob, you will exert yourself effectually in favor of us, who are helpless.” And, again, “if you do not approve of my remaining at Fyzabad, send a person here in your name, to remove the mother of the late Nabob, myself, and about 2000 other women and children, that we may reside with

honor and reputation in some other place." Mr. Sheridan, in a regular progression of evidence, proceeded to state the successive periods, and finally to bring down the immediate subject in question to the day in which Mr. Hastings embraced the project of plundering the Begums; and, to justify which, he had exhibited in his defence four charges against them, as the grounds and motives of his own conduct.

1. That they had given disturbance at all times to the government of the Nabob, and that they had long manifested a spirit hostile to his and to the English government.

2. That they excited the Zemindars to revolt, at the time of the insurrection at Benares, and of the resumption of the Jaghires.

3. That they resisted by armed force the resumption of their own Jaghires; and,

4. That they excited, and were accessory to, the insurrection at Benares.

To each of these charges, Mr. Sheridan gave distinct and separate answers. First, on the subject of the imputed disturbances which they were falsely said to have occasioned, he could produce a variety of extracts, many of them written by Mr. Hastings himself, to prove that on the contrary they had particularly distinguished themselves by their friendship for the English, and the various good offices which they had rendered the government.

Mr. Hastings (Mr. Sheridan observed,) left Calcutta in 1781, and proceeded to Lucknow, as he said himself, with two great objects in his mind; namely, Benares and Oude. What was the nature of these boasted resources?—that he should plunder one, or both,—the equitable alternative of a highwayman, who in going forth in the evening, hesitates which of his resources to prefer—Bagshot, or Hounslow. In such a state of generous irresolution, did Mr. Hastings proceed to Benares and Oude. At Benares he failed, in his pecuniary object. Then, and not till then—not on account of any ancient

enmities shown by the Begums—not in resentment of any old disturbances, but because he had failed in one place, and had but two in his prospect, did he conceive the base expedient of plundering these aged women. He had no pretence—he had no excuse—he had nothing but the arrogant and obstinate determination to govern India by his own corrupt will to plead for his conduct. Inflamed by disappointment in his first project, he hastened to the fortress of Chunar, to meditate the more atrocious design of instigating a son against his mother, of sacrificing female dignity and distress to parricide and plunder. At Chunar was that infamous treaty concerted with the Nabob Vizier, to despoil the Princesses of Oude of their hereditary possessions;—there it was that Mr. Hastings had stipulated with one, whom he called an *independent prince*, “that as great distress has arisen to the nabob’s government from the military power and dominion assumed by the Jaghierdars, he be *permitted* to resume such as he may find necessary; with a reserve, that all such, for the amount of whose Jaghiers the company are guarantees, shall, in case of the resumption of their lands, be paid the amount of their net collections, through the resident, in ready money;—and that no English resident be appointed to Furruckabad.”

No sooner was this foundation of iniquity thus instantly established, in violation of the pledged faith and solemn guarantee of the British government; no sooner had Mr. Hastings determined to invade the substance of justice, than he resolved to avail himself of her judicial forms; and accordingly dispatched a messenger from the chief justice of India, to assist him in perpetrating the violations he had projected. Sir Elijah having arrived, Mr. Hastings, with much art, proposed a question of opinion, involving an unsubstantiated fact, in order to obtain even a surreptitious approbation of the measure he had predetermined to adopt. “The

Begums being in actual rebellion, might not the nabob confiscate their property?" "Most undoubtedly," was the ready answer of the friendly judge. Not a syllable of inquiry intervened, as to the existence of the imputed rebellion; nor a moment's pause as to the ill purposes to which the decision of a chief justice might be perverted. It was not the office of a friend to mix the grave caution and cold circumspection of a judge, with an opinion taken in such circumstances; and Sir Elijah had previously declared, that he gave his advice not as a judge, but as a friend; a character he equally preferred, in the strange office which he undertook, of collecting defensive affidavits on the subject of Benares.

Mr. Sheridan said, it was curious to reflect on the whole of Sir Elijah's circuit at that perilous time. Sir Elijah had stated his desire of relaxing from the fatigues of office, and unbending his mind in a party of health and pleasure: yet wisely apprehending that very sudden relaxation might defeat its object, he had contrived to mix some matters of business, to be interspersed with his amusements. He had, therefore, in his little airing of nine hundred miles, great part of which he went post, escorted by an army, selected those very situations where insurrection subsisted, and rebellion was threatened; and had not only delivered his deep and curious researches into the laws and rights of nations and of treaties, in the capacity of the Oriental Grotius, whom Warren Hastings was to study; but likewise in the humbler and more practical situation of a collector of *ex parte* evidence. In the former quality, his opinion was the premature sanction for plundering the Begums;—in the latter character, he became the posthumous supporter of the expulsion and pillage of the Rajah Cheit Sing. Acting on an unproved fact, on a position as a datum of the Duke of Richmond's fabrication, he had not hesitated, in the first instance, to lend his authority

as a license for unlimited persecution. In the latter, he did not disdain to scud about India, like an itinerant informer, with a pedlar's pack of garbled evidence and surreptitious affidavits. What pure friendship, what a voucher of unequivocal attachment from a British Judge to such a character as Warren Hastings! With a generous oblivion of duty and of honor; with a proud sense of having authorized all future rapacity, and sanctioned all past oppression, this friendly judge proceeded on his circuit of health and ease; and whilst the Governor-General, sanctioned by this solemn opinion, issued his orders to plunder the Begums of their treasure, Sir Elijah pursued his progress; and passing through a wide region of distress and misery, explored a country that presented a speaking picture of hunger and of nakedness, in quest of objects best suited to his feelings, in anxious search of calamities most kindred to his invalid imagination.

Thus whilst the executive power in India was perverted to the most disgraceful inhumanities, the judicial authority also became its close and confidential associate—at the same moment that the sword of government was turned to an assassin's dagger, the pure ermine of justice was stained and foiled with the basest and meanest contamination. Under such circumstance did Mr. Hastings complete the treaty of Chunar;—a treaty which might challenge all the treaties that ever subsisted, for containing in the smallest compass the most extensive treachery. Mr. Hastings did not conclude that treaty, till he had received from the Nabob a present, or rather a bribe, of 100,000*l*.

The circumstances of this present were as extraordinary as the thing itself. Four months afterwards, and not till then, Mr. Hastings communicated the matter to the company. Unfortunately for himself, however, this tardy disclosure was conveyed in words which betrayed his original meaning; for, with no common incaution, he admits the pre-

sent "*was of a magnitude not to be concealed.*" Mr. Sheridan stated all the circumstances of this bribe; and averred that the whole had its rise in a principle of rank corruption. For what was the consideration for this extraordinary bribe? No less than the withdrawing from Oude not only all the English gentlemen in official situations, but the whole also of the English army; and that too at the very moment when he himself had stated the whole country of Oude to be in open revolt and rebellion. Other very strange articles were contained in the same treaty, which nothing but this infamous bribe could have occasioned, together with the reserve which he had in his own mind of treachery to the Nabob; for the only part of the treaty which he ever attempted to carry into execution was to withdraw the English gentlemen from Oude. The Nabob, indeed, considered this as essential to his deliverance; and his observation on the circumstance was curious;—for though Major Palmer, said he, has not yet asked any thing, I observe it is the custom of the English gentlemen constantly to ask for something from me before they go. This imputation on the English Mr. Hastings was most ready, most rejoiced, to countenance as a screen and shelter for his own abandoned profligacy; and therefore, at the very moment that he pocketed the extorted spoils of the Nabob, with his usual grave hypocrisy and cant, "Go," he said, to the English gentlemen, "go, you oppressive rascals, go from this worthy unhappy man, whom *you* have plundered, and leave him to *my* protection. You have robbed him—you have plundered him—you have taken advantage of his accumulated distresses; but, please God, he shall in future be at rest; for I have promised him he shall never see the face of an Englishman again." This, however, was the only part of the treaty which he even affected to fulfil; and, in all its other parts, we learn from himself, that at the very moment he made it, he intended to

deceive the Nabob; and accordingly he advised *general* instead of *partial* resumption, for the express purpose of defeating the first views of the Nabob; and, instead of giving instant and unqualified assent to all the articles of the treaty; he perpetually qualified, explained, and varied them with new diminutions and reservations. Mr. Sheridan called upon gentlemen to say, if there was any theory in Machiavel, any treachery upon record, if they had ever heard of any cold Italian fraud which could in any degree be put in comparison with the disgusting hypocrisy, and unequalled baseness which Mr. Hastings had shewn on that occasion.

After having stated this complicated infamy in terms of the severest reprehension, Mr. Sheridan proceeded to observe, that he recollected to have heard it advanced by some of those admirers of Mr. Hastings, who were not so implicit as to give unqualified applause to his crimes, that they found an apology for the atrocity of them, in the greatness of his mind. To estimate the solidity of such a defence, it would be sufficient merely to consider in what consisted this prepossessing distinction, this captivating characteristic of greatness of mind. Is it not solely to be traced in great actions directed to great ends? In them, and them alone, we are to search for true estimable magnanimity. To them only can we justly affix the splendid title and honors of real greatness. There was indeed another species of greatness, which displayed itself in boldly conceiving a bad measure, and undauntedly pursuing it to its accomplishment. But had Mr. Hastings the merit of exhibiting either of these descriptions of greatness;—even of the latter? He saw nothing great—nothing magnanimous—nothing open—nothing direct in his measures, or in his mind;—on the contrary, he had too often pursued the worst objects by the worst means. His course was an eternal deviation from rectitude. He either tyrannised or deceived; and was by turns a Diony-

sus and a Scapin. As well might the writhing obliquity of the serpent be compared to the swift directness of the arrow, as the duplicity of Mr. Hastings's ambition to the simple steadiness of genuine magnanimity. In his mind all was shuffling, ambiguous, dark, insidious, and little: nothing simple, nothing unmixed: all affected plainness, and actual dissimulation;—a heterogeneous mass of contradictory qualities; with nothing great but his crimes; and even those contrasted by the littleness of his motives, which at once denoted both his baseness and his meanness, and marked him for a traitor and a trickster. Nay, in his stile and writing, there was the same mixture of vicious contrarieties;—the most groveling ideas were conveyed in the most inflated language; giving mock consequence to low cavils, and uttering quibbles in heroics; so that his compositions disgusted the mind's taste, as much as his actions excited the soul's abhorrence. Indeed this mixture of character seemed by some unaccountable, but inherent quality, to be appropriated, though in inferior degrees, to every thing that concerned his employers. He remembered to have heard an honorable and learned gentleman (Mr. Dundas) remark, that there was something in the first frame and constitution of the company, which extended the sordid principles of their origin over all their successive operations; connecting with their civil policy, and even with their boldest achievements, the meanness of a pedlar, and the profligacy of pirates. Alike in the political and the military line could be observed *auctioneering ambassadors* and *trading generals*;—and thus we saw a revolution brought about by *affidavits*; an army employed in *executing an arrest*; a town besieged on a *note of hand*; a prince dethroned for the *balance of an account*. Thus it was they exhibited a government, which united the mock majesty of a bloody sceptre, and the little *traffic of a merchant's counting-house*, wielding a truncheon with one hand, and *picking a pocket*

with the other. Mr. Sheridan now went into a long statement to shew the various irrefragable proofs exhibited in the minutes of the Bengal council, of the falsity of the charge, viz. That the Begums were the antient disturbers of the government. And equally to prove that the second charge also (namely, that the Begums had incited the Jaghiredars to resist the Nabob) was no less untrue; it being substantiated in evidence that not one of the Jaghiredars *did* resist.

Mr. Sheridan maintained that it was incontrovertible that the Begums were not concerned either in the rebellion of Bulbudder, or the insurrection at Benares; nor did Mr. Hastings ever once *seriously* believe them guilty. Their *treasures* were their *treasons*, and Asoph ul Dowlah thought like an unwise prince, when he blamed his father for leaving him so little wealth. His father, Shulah ul Dowlah, acted wisely in leaving his son with no temptation about him, to invite acts of violence from the rapacious. He cloathed him with poverty as with a shield, and armed him with necessity as with a sword.

The third charge was equally false. Did they resist the resumption of their own Jaghiredars? Though if they *had* resisted, he contended that there would have been no crime; for those Jaghiredars were by solemn treaty confirmed to them; but, on the contrary, there was not one syllable of charge against them. The Nabob himself, with all the load of obloquy which he incurred, never imputed to them the crime of stirring up an opposition to his authority.

To prove the falsehood of the whole of this charge, and to shew that Mr. Hastings originally projected the plunder; that he threw the odium, in the first instance, on the Nabob; that he imputed the crimes to them before he had received one of the rumours which he afterwards manufactured into affidavits, Mr. Sheridan recommended a particular attention

to dates; and he deduced from the papers these facts:—that the first idea was started by Mr. Hastings on the 15th of November, 1781; that Mr. Middleton communicated it to the Nabob, and procured from him a formal proposition on the 2d of December; that on the 1st of December Mr. Hastings wrote a letter to Mr. Middleton, confirming the first suggestion made through Sir Elijah, which letter came into the hands of Mr. Middleton on the 6th of December. He stated all the circumstances of the pains taken by Mr. Middleton to bring the Nabob at length to issue with the Perwannas, and coupled this with the extraordinary minute written by Mr. Hastings on his return to Calcutta, where he stated the resistance of the Begums to the execution of the resumption on the 7th of January, 1782, as the cause of the measure in November 1781. Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to prove, that the Begums were, by their condition, their age, and their infirmities, almost the only souls in India who could not have a thought of distressing that government, by which alone they could hope to be protected; and that to charge them with a design to depose their nearest and dearest relation, was equally absurd. He did not endeavour to do this from any idea, that because there was no motive for the offences imputed to these women, it was therefore a necessary consequence that such imputations were false. He was not to learn that there was such a crime as wanton, unprovoked wickedness. Those who entertained doubts on this point need only give themselves the trouble of reading the administration of Mr. Hastings. But, as to the immediate case, the documents on the table would bear incontrovertible testimony that insurrections had constantly taken place in Oude. To ascribe it to the Begums was wandering even beyond the improbabilities of fiction. It were not less absurd to affirm, that famine would not have pinched, nor thirst have parched, nor extermination have depopulated—but for the interference of these

old women. To use a strong expression of Mr. Hastings on another occasion, "The good which those women did was certain—the ill was precarious." But Mr. Hastings had found it more suitable to his purposes to reverse the proposition; yet wanting a motive for his rapacity, he could find it only in fiction. The simple fact was, their treasure was their treason. But "they complained of the injustice." God of Heaven, had they not a right to complain! After a solemn treaty violated;—plundered of all their property, and on the eve of the last extremity of wretchedness, were they to be deprived of the last resource of impotent wretchedness—complaint and lamentation! Was it a crime that they should croud together in fluttering trepidation like a flock of resistless birds on seeing the felon kite, who, having darted at one devoted bird, and missed his aim, singled out a new object, and was springing on his prey with redoubled vigor in his wing, and keener vengeance in his eye. The fact with Mr. Hastings was precisely this:—Having failed in the case of Cheit Sing, he saw his fate; he felt the necessity of procuring a sum of money somewhere, for he knew that to be the never-failing receipt to make his peace with the directors at home. Such, Mr. Sheridan added, were the true substantial motives of the horrid excesses perpetrated against the Begums!—excesses, in every part of the description of which, he felt himself accompanied by the vigorous support of the most unanswerable evidence; and upon *this* test would he place his whole cause. Let gentlemen lay their hands upon their hearts, and with truth issuing in all its purity from their lips, solemnly declare whether they *were* or *were not* convinced that the *real* spring of the conduct of Mr. Hastings, far from being a desire to crush a rebellion (an ideal, fabulous rebellion!) was a malignantly rapacious determination to seize, with lawless hands, upon the treasures of devoted, miserable, yet unoffending victims.

Mr. Sheridan now adverted to the affidavit made by Mr. Middleton; and after stating how futile were the grounds upon which he had, to the satisfaction of his conscience, proceeded to the utmost extremity of violence against the Begums; he exclaimed, the God of Justice forbid that any man in this house should make up his mind to *accuse* Mr. Hastings on the ground which Mr. Middleton took for *condemning* the Begums; or to pass a verdict of guilty for the most trivial misdemeanor against the poorest wretch that ever had existed. He then revised and animadverted on the affidavits of Colonel Hannay, Colonel Gordon, Major M'Donald, Major Williams, and others. Major Williams, among the strange reports that chiefly filled these affidavits, stated one that *he* had heard—namely, that 50 British troops, watching 200 prisoners, had been surrounded by 6000 of the enemy, and relieved by the approach of *nine* men. And of such extraordinary hearsay-evidence were most of the depositions composed. Considering, therefore, the character given by Mr. Hastings to the British army in Oude, “that they manifested a rage for rapacity and speculation,” it was extraordinary that there were no instances of stouter swearing. But as for Colonel Gordon, he afforded a flagrantly conspicuous proof of the *grateful spirit and temper* of affidavits designed to plunge these wretched women in irretrievable ruin. Colonel Gordon was, just before, *not merely released from danger, but preserved from imminent death* by the very person whose accuser he thought fit to become; and yet, *incredible* as it may appear, even at the expiration of two little days from his deliverance, he deposes against the distressed and unfortunate woman who had become his *saviour*, and *only upon hearsay evidence* accuses her of crimes and rebellion. Great God of Justice! (exclaimed Mr. Sheridan) canst thou from thy eternal throne look down upon such premeditated turpitude of heart, and not fix some mark of dreadful

vengeance upon the perpetrators?—Of Mr. M'Donald, he said, that he liked not the memory which remembered things better at the end of five years than at the time, unless there might be something so relaxing in the climate of India, and so affecting the memory as well as the nerves, “the soft figures melting away,” and the images of immediate action instantaneously dissolving, men must return to their native air of England, to brace up the mind as well as the body, and have their memories, like their sinews, restrung.

Having painted the loose quality of the affidavits, he said, that he must pause a moment, and particularly address himself to one description of gentlemen, those of the learned profession, within those walls. They saw that that house was the path to fortune in their profession; that they might soon expect that some of them were to be called to a dignified situation, where the great and important trust would be reposed in them of protecting the lives and fortunes of their fellow-subjects. One right honorable and learned gentleman, in particular (Sir Lloyd Kenyon) if rumour spoke right, might suddenly be called to succeed that great and venerable character, who long had shone the brightest luminary of his profession, whose pure and steady light was clear even to its latest moment, but whose last beam must now too soon be extinguished. That he would ask the supposed successor of Lord Mansfield, to calmly reflect on these extraordinary depositions, and solemnly to declare, whether the mass of affidavits taken at Lucknow would be received by him as evidence to convict the lowest object in this country? If he said it would, he declared to God he would sit down, and not add a syllable more to the too long trespass which he had made on the patience of the committee.

Mr. Sheridan went farther into the exposure of the evidence, into the comparison of dates, and the subsequent circumstances, in order to prove that all

the enormous consequence which followed from the resumption, in the captivity of the women, and the imprisonment and cruelties practised on their people, were solely to be ascribed and to be imputed to Mr. Hastings. After stating the miseries which the women suffered, he said that Mr. Hastings had once remarked, that a mind touched with superstition might have contemplated the fate of the Rohillas with peculiar impressions. But if indeed the mind of Mr. Hastings could yield to superstitious imagination; if his fancy could suffer any disturbance, and even in vision, image forth the proud spirit of Sujah Dowlah, looking down upon the ruin and devastation of his family, and beholding that palace which Mr. Hastings had first wrested from his hand, and afterwards restored, plundered by that very army with which he himself had vanquished the Mahrattas; seizing on the very plunder which he had ravaged from the Rohillas; that Middleton, who had been engaged in managing the previous violations, most busy to perpetrate the last; that very Hastings, whom, on his death bed, he had left the guardian of his wife and mother, and family, turning all those dear relations, the objects of his solemn trust, forth to the merciless seasons, and to a more merciless soldiery! A mind touched with superstition must indeed have cherished such a contemplation with peculiar impressions!—That Mr. Hastings was regularly acquainted with all the enormities committed on the Begums there was the clearest proof;—It was true that Middleton was rebuked for not being more exact. He did not, perhaps, descend to the detail; he did not give him an account of the number of groans which were heaved; of the quantity of tears which were shed; of the weight of the fetters; or of the depth of the dungeons: but he communicated every step which he took to accomplish the base and unwarrantable end. He told him, that to save appearances they must use the name of the Nabob, and that they need

go no farther than was absolutely necessary ; this he might venture to say without being suspected by Mr. Hastings of too severe a morality. The Governor-General also endeavored to throw a share of the guilt on the council, although Mr. Wheeler had never taken any share, and Mr. Macpherson had not arrived in India when the scene began. After contending that he had shrunk from the inquiry ordered by the court of directors, under a new and pompous doctrine, that the majesty of justice was to be approached with supplication, and was not to degrade itself by hunting for crimes ; forgetting the infamous employment to which he had appointed an English chief justice, to hunt for criminal charges against innocent, defenceless women.—Mr. Sheridan said, he trusted that that house would vindicate the insulted character of justice ; that they would demonstrate its true quality, essence, and purposes—they would demonstrate it to be, in the case of Mr. Hastings, active, inquisitive, and avenging.

Mr. Sheridan remarked, that he heard of factions and parties in that house, and knew they existed. There was scarcely a subject upon which they were not broken and divided into sects. The prerogative of the crown found its advocates among the representatives of the people. The privileges of the people found opponents even in the house of commons itself. Habits, connexions, parties, all led to diversity of opinion. But when inhumanity presented itself to their observations, it found no division among them : they attacked it as their common enemy ; and, as if the character of this land was involved in their zeal for its ruin, they left it not till it was completely overthrown. It was not given to that house, to behold the objects of their compassion and benevolence in the present extensive consideration, as it was to the officers who relieved, and who so feelingly described the extatic emotions of gratitude in the instant of deliverance. They could not behold the workings of the heart,

the quivering lips, the trickling tears, the loud and yet tremulous joys of the millions whom their vote of this night would for ever save from the cruelty of corrupted power. But though they could not directly see the effect, was not the true enjoyment of their benevolence increased by the blessing being conferred unseen? Would not the omnipotence of Britain be demonstrated to the wonder of nations, by stretching its mighty arm across the deep, and saving by its *fiat* distant millions from destruction? And would the blessings of the people thus saved, dissipate in empty air? No! if I may dare to use the figure,—we shall constitute Heaven itself our proxy, to receive for us the blessings of their pious gratitude, and the prayers of their thanksgiving.—It is with confidence, therefore, Sir, that I move you on this charge, “that Warren Hastings be impeached.”

FEBRUARY 8.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

The debate of the preceding day was resumed by Mr. Francis, in support of the charge; and by Mr. Burgess, Major Scott, Mr. Nicholls, Mr. Vansittart, and Mr. Alderman Le Mesurier in defence of Mr. Hastings. After having heard the arguments on both sides, Mr. Pitt rose to deliver his statements. He observed, that as he had ever been of opinion that the charge relative to the Princesses of Oude was that which of all others, bore upon the face of it the strongest marks of criminality and cruelty, so had he been particularly careful to guard against the impression of every sort of prejudice, and to keep his mind open for the reception of whatever could tend, on the one hand, to establish innocence, or on the other, to bring home conviction of guilt; and in order the better to enable himself to decide with safety, he had with the utmost minuteness and attention, compared the charge, article by article, with the evidence adduced at the bar in support of each, and with the various minutes and letters that had been brought before the house, or were any where to be found within his reach. He then declared, that although, for reasons he should state, he thought himself bound to vote with the gentleman who brought the charge, yet he wished it to be understood, that he did not accede to the whole of the grounds of the accusation contained in the charge, or the inferences that had been drawn from them. He then stated the two great points in the charge, in which

he thought the criminality of Mr. Hastings had been fully proved. The resumption of the Jaghires was a measure, which in his opinion, might, in certain situations, have been justified; but the situation of the East-India Company, as guarantee of the treaty, laid them under the strongest obligation, perhaps, to have positively, and at all events resisted, but at least not to have prompted it. The seizure of the treasures being neither supported by any formal proceedings of justice nor by any state necessity, it was, he said, impossible not to condemn it; and it was greatly aggravated by making the Nabob the instrument; the son the instrument of robbing the mother. The crime of Mr. Hastings, he thought still further aggravated by his stifling the orders of the court of directors, which expressly commanded a revision of the proceedings against those princesses. With respect to many other collateral circumstances urged in aggravation of the charge, he thought them either not criminal or not brought home to Mr. Hastings.

Mr. SHERIDAN having said that he entertained too grateful a sense of the liberal indulgence with which the house was pleased to honor him on the preceding day, to think of trespassing at present, for any length of time, upon their patience, added, that several gentlemen had done him much greater honor than he deserved; but he could not but feel and acknowledge it to be a compliment, when the right honorable gentleman was pleased so far to flatter him, as to say, that the arguments he had taken the liberty of troubling the house with, when he made the motion, had in any degree contributed to fix his vote in its support. Of such a compliment he was indeed proud, because conscious as he was that he stood up in a good cause, the advocate for millions, and the advocate for strict justice, to find he was likely to prove successful, could not but afford him the most solid satisfaction. He was the more happy also, as the right honorable gentleman, by his conduct, had proved, (what he should always be happy to bear witness to) that however the right honorable gentleman, and those with whom he acted, had differences, and sometimes warm altercations, on various political occasions; yet, when a great national question that called for the aggregate support of parliament fell under consideration, their political and party differences sunk into petty jars,

and the right honorable gentleman, laying aside all party considerations, was ready, in an open and manly way, to come forward, and prove himself a minister, who felt for the honor and character of that house, and for the honor and character of the country. With regard to the objection the right honorable gentleman had taken, at his having, as the right honorable gentleman thought, expressed himself rather too warmly respecting the individual principally concerned in their present proceedings, he was extremely sorry if that had been the case. He neither felt nor professed to feel any malignity against Mr. Hastings. Those who knew him most intimately, he believed, indeed, he might without vanity, say, knew that he had no malignity in his composition, and that he was not capable of feeling such an unworthy passion against any man. An honorable gentleman, (Major Scott) who had spoken early in the debate, amidst a variety of extraneous matter, had thought proper to allude to a conversation once more, which had previously occurred in that house, at which he was a little surprised, as the committee would, without doubt, recollect that the honorable gentleman had been under the necessity of acknowledging that he had been mistaken in some of his most essential particulars. If the reason of the honorable gentleman's allusion of that day had been owing to a part of his speech the preceding day, when he had talked of Mr. Hastings's dependents, he assured the honorable gentleman, upon his honor, he did not mean him. When he stood up in his place the public accuser of Mr. Hastings, he should be ashamed, indeed, if he could be thought capable of alluding to any gentleman who had a right to a seat in that house, and call himself the friend of Mr. Hastings. The honorable gentleman had that day said he was under obligations to Mr. Hastings; that being the case, his motives for attachment to Mr. Hastings were truly honorable. Gratitude was a virtue, amiable even in error.

There was something in the frame of the mind of man which accorded with grateful feelings; and where the heart owed an obligation, the judgment could not be acute. Far be it from him then to find fault with any honorable gentleman who acted upon so noble, so praise-worthy a principle. Mr. Sheridan now added, that, after the vote of that day, Mr. Hastings and the house would be at issue. The business must then be removed to the proper tribunal; and he begged in the interim that gentlemen would recollect (for they seemed a little to forget) that their votes upon the distinct charges did not go to make Mr. Hastings a criminal, and they were not acting as judges, but as prosecutors. The judgment-seat was placed elsewhere; and if Mr. Hastings should be acquitted, unworthy, indeed, should he hold that man who either within or beyond the walls of parliament considered Mr. Hastings otherwise than innocent.

The question being at length called for, and the house dividing, there appeared for the motion 175; against it 68.

FEBRUARY 12.

**PETITION FROM THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
FOR FURTHER TIME TO CONSIDER THE TEN-
DENCY OF THE TREATY WITH FRANCE.**

Before the house resolved itself into a committee upon the treaty of commerce and navigation with France, a petition was presented by Mr. Alderman Newnham from certain manufacturers assembled in their chamber of commerce, praying, that the house would not that day come to any decisive resolution upon the commercial treaty with France; as the petitioners had not had leisure to understand the treaty, and consequently, were not yet aware to what degree their interests, and the interests of other manufacturers were likely to be affected by it. The petition was opposed by Mr. Pitt.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that a material difference must arise, could it, on the present occasion, be taken for granted that the manufacturers would have time for enquiry—and that this night's discus-

sion was not to be concluded with resolutions committing the house in any degree to the acceptation of the treaty; and for his own part he objected to the error which had gone abroad, that the house was to be involved by this night's vote. He contended, on the contrary, that the house would not be committed to the acceptation of the treaty until they had passed the last vote on the last bill, which was necessary to the carrying into execution the treaty. He begged at the same time to call the attention of the house to one material point, in which he believed this important subject had not yet been considered. The Irish propositions had been mentioned. If this treaty should pass, would it not become absolutely necessary that those propositions, reprobated and rejected as they were, must be revived, or at least that a system of intercourse of some kind, must be established between this and the sister kingdom; for it was totally impossible that the present system should continue if the treaty with France took place? He wished therefore to learn explicitly from the right honorable gentleman, whether, in case the treaty of France was carried into effect, it was his intention to revive the Irish propositions? There was one other matter which he must mention. The right honorable gentleman contended that the treaty had been between four and five months before the public. He denied this fact. It had been but fourteen days—for until the convention appeared, the treaty could not be said to be before them; in so far as that convention so materially affected several of the most leading features of the treaty, and that the whole could only be construed by a comparison of them both.

To the manufacturers it was unbecomingly insinuated, that some parts of the treaty to which they objected, should be amended in the convention. This lulled them into silence; and now that the convention was come, not any correction of the errors complained of could be found in it. The house was

doubtless in the recollection of a garbled meeting of manufacturers, artfully convened on the 9th of December, and consisting only of three persons, whose partial resolutions had been industriously circulated throughout the kingdom. This meeting had but five letters sent to them, and three of the five disapproved of the treaty.

No immediate answer being given, the speaker put the question for leaving the chair, which was carried.

FEBRUARY 15.

COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE.

Previous to the motion being made for the speaker leaving the chair, Captain Minchin reminded the house, that some papers were requisite for the information of members on the subject of the commercial treaty. Those he wished to have before he was called upon to give his vote; for, without the information which they contained, he was incompetent to decide upon the question.—For this reason, he hoped the house would not think of resolving itself into a committee, until they had these papers laid before them.—Mr. Pitt observed, if the papers were wanting, they would be moved for as well in the committee as at the present moment.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that though the committee should proceed without the papers, he did not perceive that any inconvenience could arise, but what might, in other stages of the passing of this act, be remedied. Whatever vote they then gave, it could not prove so decisive as not to admit of being retracted or corrected before the close of the whole business. The bill, after its commitment, must be reported; amendments might be then proposed; this might cause a re-commitment, and again a report: it must be then read a third time, and afterwards passed. In all these stages, gentlemen would certainly have an opportunity of proposing any objections which might occur, or alterations which they might wish to adopt, from any additional intelligence they might receive from papers they had to expect. With this conviction he did not entertain

the least dislike against going into the committee ; but he certainly had a very great objection to the business being so precipitately hurried through the house. On this occasion, he trusted that he should be allowed to express his anxious hopes that the consideration of the commercial treaty would not induce the house to forget the remainder of the charges against Mr. Hastings. If the treaty was to be gone through entirely before they entered on the discussion of any other business, the affairs of Mr. Hastings might be referred, so far as he could judge, *ad calendas græcas* ; for he understood that there were now above three thousand different resolutions preparing for the house to digest ; and he supposed that, during the progress of the business, the minister would just bring in about half a dozen bills each day, and have them read a third time, for the sake of expediting a matter, which he held to be of such importance. He must remind him, however, that he could not, from past experience, flatter himself with the hopes of passing the bill over so glibly ; as, in every stage, it was liable to meet with opposition.

The house shortly after resolved itself into a committee, on the commercial treaty.

FEBRUARY 16.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

The honorable Thomas Pelham moved, that the order of the day for the house to resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider farther of the several articles of charge of high crimes and misdemeanors against Warren Hastings, Esq. be now read ; it being read accordingly, he moved to discharge the order, which being agreed to, he next moved, that the house should resolve itself into a committee for the said purpose, on the ensuing Thursday. Mr. Pitt said, he would give his consent provided it was understood that the order should be farther discharged, should it so happen that the business of the commercial treaty with France, was not finished by that day.

Mr. SHERIDAN contended, that the charges against Mr. Hastings were undoubtedly matters of

infinite seriousness and importance, and ought not to be set aside as secondary considerations. He begged the house to recollect, that something was due from them to Mr. Hastings, whose character, and whatsoever could prove dear to him, was at stake; and whose feelings, therefore, ought not to be sported with by wanton and unnecessary delay.

COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE.

This day Mr. Fox made his last effort to induce the house to take some step for securing the continuance of the Methuen treaty, and averting the danger, to which he contended it was exposed, by a resolution the house had come to the preceding night—a resolution which, if not followed by some correspondent proposition respecting Portugal, would manifest a disregard to that nation, little short of a direct affront. He concluded with moving, “That it be an instruction to the committee, that they do, in the first place, proceed to consider of reducing the duties upon wines directly imported from Portugal into Great Britain; so that such wines may pay no higher duties than two-thirds of the duties to be imposed upon wines imported directly from France.” The motion was opposed by Mr. Pitt, as interfering, by a premature resolution, in a matter delegated by the constitution to the executive government. He asserted, that a declaration delivered by him in his place, and as a minister, that such a negotiation was pending, was entitled to be considered as formal parliamentary information. He concluded with stating, that he had every reason to expect the negotiation would prove successful; if, however, it should not succeed, he would lay before the house, for their judgments, the grounds upon which it had failed.*

Mr. SHERIDAN affirmed that the house of commons was constitutionally empowered to interfere with treaties, even pending their negotiation. There were treaties over which the prerogative was paramount: there were treaties, also, of another description, with which the house was particularly concerned, and which the execution of depended solely

* “That it appears to be expedient that all the articles of the growth, produce, and manufactures, of the European dominions of the French king, which are not specified in the tariff of the treaty, shall be imported into this kingdom, on payment of duties as low as any which shall be payable on the like articles from any other European nation.”

on the voice of the house of commons. He added that the motion of his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox) was not an active measure in favor of Portugal; it was a point of right due to the Methuen treaty, and merely a motion to do that immediately, which the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had pledged himself to do, (granting that he would do it at all) previously to the bill, or bills going out of the house.

Upon the responsibility which the minister agreed to take upon himself, Mr. Fox consented to withdraw his motion; and the house being resolved into a committee, Mr. Pitt proceeded to move several resolutions for imposing certain duties. On coming to that referring to brandies, Mr. Fox desired to know, whether, at the time the duties on brandies were meant to be reduced, it was not intended to accompany the alteration with a reduction in the duties on rums. Mr. Pitt replied in the affirmative; and also said, he intended, on an early day, to propose a still greater reduction on brandies and other spirits, from certain considerations of revenue, and with a view to extend the system so happily and successfully commenced three years since, to the great prevention and abolition of smuggling.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that at length, and consequently for the first time, the right honorable gentleman had confessed, that his much-boasted commutation bill had failed him. The right honorable gentleman had made it one great ground of exultation upon his assurances of the success of the measure, that it would entirely put an end to the smuggling of brandies. The committee would recollect, that he (Mr. Sheridan) had on frequent occasions told the right honorable gentleman, that a day would come, when he must experience the unavoidable obligation of confessing the measure had failed, and that all which he foretold had been verified.

In his reply, Mr. Pitt said, "he wondered which he ought most to admire—the confidence, or the ignorance, of the honorable gentleman's assertions. Could any man in his senses have believed that such a speech as the honorable gentleman had just delivered, could have been excited by any thing which had fallen from him?" &c.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that if he had entertained the smallest doubt of the correctness of

his recollection before, he was now convinced he had been perfectly correct, from the right honorable gentleman's being so very angry. He begged leave, however, to remind the right honorable gentleman, it was not altogether decent for a minister to address any member of that house in such language; it was, besides, extremely ill judged of any gentleman to descend to it, because it laid him open to so easy a retort. All the return which he should make was by declaring (what he was persuaded the majority of the committee must feel with him) that the ill manners of the right honorable gentleman were not more conspicuous, than the weakness of his conduct, in charging him with confidence and ignorance without a single argument to prove the foundation of any such charge. Having said this, Mr. Sheridan declared, the committee were no strangers to the practice of the right honorable gentleman, when any member shewed that his words on a former occasion, and his subsequent conduct, were at variance with each other. On the present occasion the right honorable gentleman had endeavoured to shift the charge by the quibble of a word, and had confidently maintained that he never said, the commutation plan would *entirely* put a stop to the smuggling of brandy. He would not, Mr. Sheridan said, take upon him to assert that the right honorable gentleman had used the word *entirely*; but he appealed to the recollection of every gentleman who heard him, whether he had not, almost as often as he had talked of the advantages expected to arise from the commutation system, rested a great part of his argument on his entertaining little or no doubt of its having the good effects of putting an end to the smuggling of brandy *in a very great degree*; or words to that effect. Mr. Sheridan asked, whether it was likely the right honorable gentleman should have confined his argument entirely to the prevention of smug-

gling of teas; and whether the abandoning of 700,000*l.* of the revenue merely with that view, would not have been a very weak scheme? Mr. Sheridan added a few comments upon the proposition respecting brandies, now hinted; and said, most undoubtedly, if the right honorable gentleman was to go from one article of excise to another, and commute, the duties on smuggling would be put an end to respecting those articles; but a day must in that case arrive, when the minister who pursued such a system, would have to come to that house, and to ask them to provide for a good round deficiency of revenue.

FEBRUARY 19.

COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE.

Mr. Beaufoy presented the resolutions which the committee had directed him to report to the house. They were read a first time, and the Speaker put the question for a second reading; when

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that he considered himself obliged to trespass upon the patience of the house, whilst he adverted to some particulars, respecting which he thought it highly necessary that the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) should give satisfactory answers, previous to any final decision concerning the resolutions contained in the report which had been just read. What he first wished to be satisfied about was, the consolidation of the duties on the customs; which, if he had understood the right honorable gentleman correctly on Friday, he meant to mix and blend with the business of the commercial treaty. If this were really the right honorable gentleman's intentions, it would surely be highly improper for the house to give their vote for the second reading of the report, before they were in possession of the additions which were meant to be made to it; and much of addition he

conceived there would be, as there were, he supposed, several other resolutions, absolutely necessary to be submitted to a committee of the whole house, on the other parts of the treaty; for, those contained in the report, the right honorable gentleman would recollect, were confined merely to the articles stated in the tariff. Another matter—which he must again mention, and to which he had received no express answer, though there was something like an answer contained in one of the right honorable gentleman's speeches—was, that proposition, which appeared to him to be indispensable and incontrovertible, that a new commercial arrangement with Ireland must be set on foot as a consequence of the commercial treaty with France. The right honorable gentleman had given them to understand, that he had no objection to hear of the Irish propositions; whether that was the fact or not, (Mr. Sheridan said) he was persuaded that, when the right honorable gentleman first introduced the business of the commercial treaty, the Irish propositions had been upon his mind throughout the whole of that long speech. Certain he was, that some arrangement between Ireland and England must take place in consequence of the present commercial treaty; because, after the right honorable gentleman had himself stated, with a proper disdain of the idea which the court of Portugal took up respecting Ireland, (with regard to her not being included in the Methuen treaty, that she ought to be considered within the spirit and meaning of that treaty, and that it was a main part of the negotiation now on foot with the court of Lisbon,) it was scarcely possible to suppose that the right honorable gentleman had himself negotiated a treaty with France, without having meant that Ireland should have the benefit of the treaty, because that would have been to have excluded Ireland from the benefit of the French treaty, exactly in the same manner as the court of Lisbon had excluded Ireland from the entire benefit of the Me-

thuen treaty. The idea of giving France privileges and advantages in Great Britain, which Ireland could not claim, was so monstrous and absurd, that he could not entertain it as possible to have been in the right honorable gentleman's intention. Another material point required some more explanation than it had received; and that was, whether or not the hovering act was not affected, and its provisions done away, by the 25th article of the treaty? A right honorable gentleman had said, it was not at all affected by the present treaty; but he had accompanied the assertion with no argument whatever.

To this Mr. Pitt observed, that, as to the hovering act, and the idea that its operation as a check on smuggling was to be suspended, the answer of his right honorable friend (Mr. Grenville) to that question was fully sufficient. It was by no means the intention of the parties that those salutary checks against illicit trade, contained in the hovering act, should be done away or weakened; on the contrary, it was the wish of each of the monarchs to prevent, as much as possible, the continuance of any such practices between both kingdoms. With respect to the proceedings intended to be followed on the business, on concluding the treaty in that house, there was nothing more necessary for them to do, than to agree to the several resolutions contained in the report from the committee; and which only went to a confirmation of the tariff. The honorable gentleman had inquired, whether it was in contemplation to frame any new arrangements of a commercial nature with Ireland, and to make such arrangements a part of the system now to be adopted; but as that was, in a great measure, to depend on the disposition and inclination of the sister kingdom—and as it was, in all respects, to be considered in the nature of a new and totally distinct treaty—it was a subject which, on the present occasion, he thought it highly improper to discuss.

Mr. SHERIDAN answered, that the explanation of the right honorable gentleman had not given him the least satisfaction whatever. He was a little amazed, also, at the silence of the right honorable gentleman himself, who, he thought, would have deigned, on questions of so much importance, to have favored the house with an immediate elucidation of the point. He thought it impossible that so monstrous a proposition as the giving

greater privileges and advantages to France, in the home market of Great Britain, than Ireland either enjoyed, or could claim, was intended: but he could not see how Ireland could be said to be entitled to all the advantages of the present treaty, without its having been so stipulated in the treaty. Mr. Sheridan animadverted on the terms of the articles of the treaty; and contended that Ireland was no where mentioned, excepting only as to her linens in the sixth article. He instanced the article of the tariff respecting brandies, where no mention was made of Ireland; and several others. Mr. Sheridan made a great variety of remarks upon the treaty, which he termed a most incorrect production; and said, he lamented the absence of the right honorable negotiator, as he should have been glad to have heard from him the meaning which he had in view, where he had not expressed it clearly. He mentioned the part which he had taken with regard to the Irish propositions, upon which he had more frequently divided with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, than with the right honorable negotiator (Mr. Eden.) The present treaty was so directly in the teeth of the evidence given by the manufacturers at the bar of the house, when the Irish propositions were under consideration, that he presumed when the negotiator of the treaty returned to his duty in that house, he would publicly declare his conviction of the error of almost every one of the opinions which he had maintained on that memorable occasion. He supposed this right honorable gentleman had sent circular letters round to the manufacturers, and declared he had not abandoned one of his commercial doctrines, though he had, *pro hoc vice*, adopted new ones; and made the treaty turn upon those new commercial sentiments, of which he had probably informed his friends of the chamber; and, at the same time had said, that he would renounce them when he came back to England. He hoped that he should

hear no more of a charge of confidence and ignorance from the right honorable gentleman, who must be confident and ignorant beyond all example, if he thought that no more resolutions were necessary to be moved on the treaty with France. To convince him that there were various additional resolutions necessary, he would bring down a string of resolutions, and submit it to him and to the house, whether they were not absolutely necessary to be moved in a committee.

Mr. Pitt said, "Mr. Sheridan had found fault with him for his patience in sitting still, and not interrupting him; although, he confessed, the unprovoked asperity which the honorable gentleman had used in speaking of him, would—if he could feel any thing from the honorable gentleman's asperity—have been a sufficient temptation for him to have interfered in his self-defence. He could not help observing on the instructions which he had received from the honorable gentleman;—that they were so conciliating, so winning, so sincere, and seemed to have so little of any intention of gratifying the person who delivered them, and to be so entirely calculated for the benefit of the person to whom they were addressed, that he could not but return the honorable gentleman his warmest thanks for the obligation he had conferred upon him."

Mr. Sheridan declared, that he was not conscious of having used any asperities, or expressed himself petulantly, angrily, or in a stile unbecoming any member of that house; and if the right honorable gentleman felt that he had, he had, indeed, afforded him a piece of instruction; for which, he was sure, the house would think he ought to confess himself indebted.

Mr. Sheridan now went into an examination of the 6th article of the convention, arguing from the words, that it contained a contradiction in terms.—The preamble of that article set off with saying, that by the 43d article of the treaty, it was stipulated that a convention relative to that article should be concluded immediately after the signature of the treaty; whereas the 6th article of convention, does not settle the matter of the 43d article of the treaty, but talks of an ulterior

convention, to be settled within the space of two months. Mr. Sheridan contended, that the convention was not the convention which had been stipulated for, by the 43d article of the treaty; and that as an ulterior convention was now to be settled, they ought to wait for that, previous to their decision.

FEBRUARY 21.

COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE.

Mr. Blackburne moved an address of congratulation to His Majesty on this subject.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that for the present he should wave all investigation of the general argument of the merits of the treaty, as he conceived the question before the house respecting the address, related to a measure so violent, so unprecedented, and so unparliamentary, that no other ground of opposition ought on that day to be taken, except to the irregularity and foulness of such a proceeding. There was, however, an observation or two which had fallen from the honorable gentleman who had just sat down, which he could not be wholly silent under, though he regarded those observations as merely among the trivial endeavors which the honorable gentleman (Mr. D. Pulteney) had resorted to, in order to divert more successfully the attention of the house, from the weighty suggestions which they had just heard from the honorable gentleman who had moved the present question. For this purpose the honorable gentleman was, undoubtedly, in the right to propose any object to gentlemen's consideration, excepting the point immediately before them;—to talk to them as a wool-comber, as a navigator, as a potter, or a philosopher, or in any character but that of a member of the house of commons, anxious for the credit and dignity of parliament, and attentive to the preservation of

those constitutional forms which were the best security for its privileges, and which were then, in fact, the only subject in debate. The single part of his digressions in which he would follow the honorable gentleman, was the insinuation he had thrown upon his motives, in having introduced Ireland as an object inseparably connected with the discussion of the present treaty. Mr. Sheridan defended his conduct in this respect, and commented on the expressions of another member (Mr. Hawkins Browne), who had said, that Ireland could not expect the same concession as France, from this country, because she had nothing to give in return; and concluded with a declaration, that it was his intention to bring this subject regularly before the house, when an opportunity would be afforded to gentlemen to support their insinuations by argument if they could; or a necessity to retract them upon conviction of their error. With regard to the honorable gentleman's allusion, to his being a self-appointed representative for Ireland, he should only say, that he trusted some credit would be given to his acting, independently of the influence of such a nomination; otherwise he must observe that it was a fortunate circumstance, that if the kingdom of Ireland had a representative in the British parliament, the lord lieutenant was possessed of the same privilege; and he trusted that it would no more be suspected that he was influenced by prejudices in favor of the country he represented, than that the honorable gentleman was directed by a servile acquiescence in the opinion of his noble constituent. Mr. Sheridan then entered into the original argument which had been first suggested by him to the house, relative to the irregularity of proposing such an address as that which was desired to be voted; enlarging upon his former arguments, and declaring that the real question was not whether the French treaty was desirable or otherwise; but whether the vital and essential privileges of parliament, con-

nected with their deliberative and legislative capacity, should be sacrificed as a mere matter of compliment at the foot of the throne.

Mr. Sheridan again rose, and said, he meant to move a new question—the question of adjournment, in order that he might have an opportunity of proposing a resolution upon the subject of the extraordinary doctrines laid down by the Chancellor of the Exchequer; doctrines as new and as unconstitutional as were ever heard within those walls! If the right honorable gentleman had entertained the notion which he had just suggested to the house, the right honorable gentleman ought to have risen the other day, and declared that he did entertain such opinions, when he (Mr. Sheridan) had expressly said, that an address precluded the house from further debate, and ought not, therefore, to be a measure proposed, till every other step had been taken, and the house had given its final vote. By his silence, when he had thus talked of an address, the right honorable gentleman had given his assent to his argument. The right honorable gentleman had told the house, that he could produce a precedent for such an address as the present, and had instantly mentioned one of his own. This was the great feature of the right honorable gentleman's administration, which commenced in proceedings directly contrary to the constitution, and had abounded with instances of outrage against it. But he, nevertheless, dared the right honorable gentleman openly to stand up and maintain, that an address, of the nature of that which the house had that night been called upon to vote, could be justified. And he would also mention one particular instance of the right honorable gentleman's conduct, which must cover him with shame and confusion; and that was, his having two years ago persuaded that house to vote an address upon the report of the Irish propositions; and two days afterwards the right honorable gentleman came down to that house, and

brought in a bill, the preamble of which contradicted, and was widely different from the words of the report. Mr. Sheridan, after complaining of the right honorable gentleman for having charged a right honorable friend of his (Mr. Burke) with a recantation of principles and doctrines which he had never avowed, but which had been avowed by another right honorable friend of his (Mr. Fox), concluded with declaring, that when the bill came to be read a first time, he would move to give his negative to the motion, on purpose to have the doctrines of the right honorable gentleman fairly and fully discussed.

Mr. Pitt replied.

Mr. Sheridan answered, if the right honorable gentleman persisted in denying that any member was not free to give his vote against a bill, after voting for an address of the nature of that then in question; he certainly would say no to the first reading of the bill, for the purpose of bringing the question fairly under discussion.

The house divided on Mr. Sheridan's motion of an adjournment; ayes 160; noes 236. The main question was then put and carried.

MARCH 7.

COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE.

Mr. Fox, after a speech of considerable length, moved, "That it is necessary to declare, that no address from this house to the throne can, in any degree, bind or pledge this house, in its legislative capacity, or bar the subject's right of petitioning this house, upon any bill depending in parliament, although such bill be founded upon, and conformable to, such an address, previously agreed to by the house."—Mr. Pitt observed, as he could not admit the necessity of the motion, he would move, in order to negative the whole, to prefix the following words, by way of amendment, viz. "*That it is now necessary to declare,*" &c.

Mr. SHERIDAN begged leave to call to the recollection of the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), that he had, on a

former occasion, charged him (Mr. Pitt) with having not only brought in a bill differing in the vital part of the system, in the permanency of it, from the resolutions grounded on the Irish propositions; but had asserted, that the Secretary in Ireland had also brought in a bill there, differing as much from the English bill; and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer of Ireland had laid great stress in his argument, on the circumstance that the Irish bill did so essentially differ from the bill sent over from England. The right honorable gentleman had formerly said, he no longer should consider himself as useful to his country, if he could not carry the measure respecting Ireland through. Mr. Sheridan ridiculed some words which, he declared, he had taken down, as the reason assigned by the right honorable gentleman in justification of the address, viz. that such a visionary and abominable stile of argument had been taken by opposition against the commercial treaty, that it became necessary, as soon as possible, to carry the resolutions up to the throne with an address, in order to convince the people that parliament was not swayed by such sort of argument. The considerable majority the treaty had been carried by, might (Mr. Sheridan said) sufficiently have operated to shew, that, however forcible the arguments of his right honorable friend had intrinsically been, they had not been allowed to have much weight within those walls. Since, however, so new a reason to justify an address had been stated, he would advise the right honorable gentleman, another time, not to rest the justification of his address upon a casual intimation in the course of his speech, but to confess the fact, and to declare it in express words in the preamble of the address itself. He should not, therefore, wonder to see very shortly an address beginning thus: "Whereas the right honorable Charles James Fox has used certain abominable arguments, of a nature tending to convince the public of the fallacy of the measures now

pursuing," &c. &c. &c. Mr. Sheridan now begged leave to notice what the right honorable gentleman had said of minorities; and declared that the right honorable gentleman had been in the only situation in a minority, that could make a man's voting in a minority contemptible, viz. the holding his office as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, nevertheless, voting in a minority. Such a situation was not only contemptible, but unconstitutional; besides it proved that, great even as his respect for majorities, and ardent as his love for them was, his love of office was greater; since the fact established, beyond all possibility of contradiction, that possession of office was his first of all objects. Mr. Sheridan at length returned to the immediate question, which he particularly pressed upon the house, instancing the general mode of proceeding all through the business; and in particular the blending the two subjects, the resolutions respecting the French treaty, and the resolutions relative to the consolidation of duties, in one bill, as unanswerable proofs that it was right to come to some general resolution, in order to guard the constitution against dangerous and (as his right honorable friend had asserted) unnecessary innovation; for the address could not forward the carrying the treaty into effect a single day, because it could neither open our ports to French ships, lower the duties, or in any degree whatsoever smooth the way to the opening of a commercial intercourse. Such a resolution could not, in the first instance, be denied to be true; and if that were universally admitted, could any one time be assigned as a more fit moment for putting it upon their Journals, than that moment immediately after their having voted an unconstitutional address to the crown; and after the contradictory conduct of the right honorable gentleman, who had, in the early progress of the business, argued as if it were right to pledge the house; and had asked what reason could be assigned, why it should not be

pledged, after having so far considered the resolutions, and approved of them? But finding that such doctrines shackled his favorite majority, and that it was likely to diminish, he had in a late debate changed his note; and at an advanced time of the night, in a most equivocal speech, argued that the address only pledged those who were prepared to be pledged; but that it did not pledge gentlemen who did not choose to admit they were pledged. This sort of double-edged speech ought to be fixed to some certain standard; and the resolution that his right honorable friend had moved, Mr. Sheridan said, would have that effect.

The question of the amendment was then put and carried; and afterwards the main question, so amended, was put; when the numbers were, ayes 113; noes 188.

MARCH 13.

COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE.

Mr. Pitt moved, "That the duty of excise on brandy should be 4s. 3d. per gallon; which, with the 9d. already imposed in the customs, would make it 5s. per gallon."

Mr. SHERIDAN lamented that it was not in his power to entertain the same sanguine hopes of the right honorable gentleman's scheme which he had been himself ready to declare he entertained; and one reason why he was inclined to put the less confidence in it, was, that he recollected that the right honorable gentleman had, two years since, come down and proposed a reduction of the duty on the home distillery, stating, that he possessed the same sanguine hopes that it would tend to add considerably to the revenue; and yet the very next year he had found that his expectations failed him; and had been obliged to put the duties on again. It was much to be lamented, that the right honorable gentleman had not been able to get the accounts of the computed quantity of brandies smuggled into this country,

upon which he had rested all his arguments in support of the present measure, before the conclusion of the commercial treaty with France. By that treaty Great Britain had stipulated to lower the duty on brandy to 7s. per gallon; whereas the right honorable gentleman now thought himself warranted to lower the duty to 5s. per gallon. Had the accounts therefore of the quantity of smuggled brandy been before obtained, the right honorable gentleman would have had something in hand, as it were, to treat with; and consequently could have treated to more advantage; as France would certainly have given an equivalent for the benefit of having her brandies imported into Great Britain upon so low a duty as 5s. per gallon. The right honorable gentleman had built his expectations of regaining the 200,000*l.* a year defalcation of the revenue, which the scheme of lowering the duty to 5s. would, in the first instance, occasion, upon a larger quantity of brandy, which would in consequence be legally imported; and, of course, the greater quantity of duty which would be paid; but although he had talked sanguinely about this, he had declared that he would not risk the loss of the 200,000*l.* entirely, but would ensure a share of it, by an addition of charge upon the licenses to be taken out by the retail venders of spirits. To the right honorable gentleman's reasoning, that it would tend to preserve the morals of the lower order of the people, by putting a check upon their practice of dram-drinking, he was very ready to subscribe; as every gentleman must wish such a pernicious practice abolished, if it were possible; but he could not help observing, that the right honorable gentleman's two arguments did not run well together, viz. by lowering the duties on brandy, the quantity legally imported would considerably increase, and thence the revenue would acquire much; and that it was nevertheless at the same time right to make an addition to the charge paid for licences, in order to check and keep down the consumption.

He did not believe that the planters and merchants of the British West-India islands, would be at all satisfied with the distinction the right honorable gentleman had declared it was his intention to make, between the duties on French brandy, and on rum, the produce of the British West-India islands. The difference of 1s. was by no means enough to enable our rums to stand a competition with the French brandies; and that it *was not*, he believed the right honorable gentleman would hear from gentlemen, more competent to speak on the subject than he could pretend to be. There was one point, however, to which he must expect to receive some answer; and that was, whether the right honorable gentleman meant to make any reduction on the malt distillery of this country? Upon that head the right honorable gentleman had been wholly silent, though it certainly was material; as the great reduction of the duties on brandies must necessarily affect the consumption of home-made malt spirits very considerably. He did hope, therefore, that the right honorable gentleman would give him some answer upon that essential point. He alluded to the language of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, respecting the effect which the commutation act would, in all probability, have on the smuggling of brandy; and, after much reasoning upon it, to prove that the right honorable gentleman's expectations at that time had failed, he concluded with repeating his declaration, that so far from entertaining sanguine hopes of the success of the present measure, as the right honorable gentleman had professed to do, he thought very differently, and did not believe that it would succeed at all.

EAST-INDIA AFFAIRS.

Mr. Dempster moved, "that copies of all orders sent out by the Directors of the East-India Company, since the year 1784, forbidding the servants in India to correspond with their friends at home relative to the affairs of the East-India Company; together with copies of all notifications of the said orders in India," be laid before the house. Mr. Dundas having opposed the motion,

Mr. Sheridan answered, that the contents of the paper proved, that under the idea of enforcing a particular order, particularly confined to the confidential servants, and those in places of special trust; an advantage had been taken by the board of control; and an order had been sent out, under the sanction of which, all the company's servants of every description had been generally interdicted from writing to their private friends at home, any account of, or opinion upon, the affairs of the company transacting in India. [*Mr. Dundas desired the honorable gentleman to recollect the words of the paper.*] Mr. Sheridan said, if he had the paper to refer to, he was satisfied he could convince the house that the true construction of it was very different from that put upon it by the right honorable and learned gentleman. The paper being upon this handed across the table to Mr. Sheridan, he began to read the contents, and to comment, as he proceeded, with a view to fix its meaning to his argument. He contended, that the preamble of the order stated, that it was necessary to enjoin the confidential servants of the company in India to secrecy; and that after it had been so stated, the order in itself was general, and equally binding upon all the servants of the company, of whatever description.

Mr. Pitt having also opposed the motion,

Mr. Sheridan remarked, that the right honorable gentleman had assigned a very singular reason for objecting to the motion; and this was, not that he had any wish that the papers should not be put upon the table; but because he would not, by suffering the motion to pass, give a sanction to the arguments advanced by that side of the house, in proof that the order ought not to have been sent to India.

The question was put, and the house divided, ayes 20; noes 94.

APRIL 2.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.*

On the 19th of February Mr. Burke observed, that the house having now solemnly declared upon two charges of high and atrocious delinquency, that they contained fit grounds of impeachment; the sooner they resorted to the antient mode of proceeding, by a vote of impeachment, the better. The proper steps might then be taken for preventing the party impeached from quitting the kingdom, removing his property, alienating any sums of money, or adopting any other means to evade the ends of justice. There was one circumstance he should mention that pointed out this, or some other proceeding of the sort, as absolutely necessary, viz. That it was confidently reported that another gentleman from India, strongly implicated in the transactions of Mr. Hastings, and against whom proceedings of a serious nature would soon be instituted, had, within a short time, sold out of the public funds property to the amount of 50,000*l*. Major Scott misapprehending that it was intended to insinuate that this property belonged to Mr. Hastings, got up to assure the house that he had no concern in it; and to declare upon his honor, that from the information he possessed relative to the affairs of Mr. Hastings, he could not take upon him to assert that his whole fortune did not exceed 50,000*l*. Mr. Pitt defended the mode of proceeding adopted by the house, and did not conceive they could with any propriety resort to any other. The day following the house being in a committee on the charges, Mr. Dundas said, that as notice had been given that a charge of a serious nature would be brought forward against Sir Elijah Impey, he would suggest to those concerned in the prosecution, that it would be inconsistent with the justice, the candor, and the benevolence of that house, to call and examine a gentleman as a witness at the bar, and then to make his evidence the ground of future crimination against himself. Mr. Burke observed it was impossible for those who had brought forward the prosecution of Mr. Hastings, to think of losing the advantage of that person's testimonies who had been the intimate confidant of the principal culprit. Sir Elijah knew, undoubtedly, too much of law, to answer any questions which might tend to criminate himself; and those who were to examine him would never insist on his answering questions of such a tendency. Mr. Pitt agreed in this opinion, but thought that the witness should have such notice of the intended charge as might tend to put him on his guard. Mr. Burke assented to this proposition, and therefore moved, "That Sir Elijah Impey be called in, and that the chairman be instructed to inform him, that it was possible that a criminal enquiry may be instituted against himself, on the ground of extra-official intelligence, and his general conduct in India; and that

* Abstract of proceedings continued from that under the head of February 8.

the subject on which he was then to be examined may lead to proceedings connected with such an enquiry." To this Sir Elijah replied, "That as he was conscious of no guilt, and as there was no part of his conduct which he would wish to secrete, this notice would make no difference in his wishes to give the committee the fullest information. He then underwent a long examination respecting the transactions with the Nabob of Farruckabad.

On the 2d of March Mr. T. Pelham opened the fourth charge, the subject of which was, the corrupt and oppressive conduct of Mr. Hastings towards the Nabob of Farruckabad. The committee decided upon this question, ayes 112; noes 50. On the 15th of March the charge relative to contracts and salaries was opened by Sir James Erskine. Mr. Pitt immediately followed, for the purpose, as he said, of bringing the question within a narrower compass, and consequently shortening the debate. The charge, he observed, might be divided into three distinct parts. The first, relating to the extravagant terms of the contracts, and the violation of the company's orders in making them; the second, to the increased salary to Sir Eyre Coote; and the third, to the unwarrantable excess of the civil expenditure during his administration. He concluded by moving an amendment to the present motion, which, if it should be adopted by the house, would leave him at liberty to vote for the general question. His amendment was to add the following words to the motion:—"In respect to the contract for bullocks in 1779, that for opium in 1781, and to the increased salary of Sir Eyre Coote."—Mr. Burke adverting to this amendment, said, he conceived himself indispensably bound to endeavor to re-amend, by inserting several other material parts of the charge. The committee divided, first upon Mr. Burke's amendment, which was carried by a majority of nine; and then upon the main question, which was carried by a majority of thirty-four. On the 22d of March, after a warm altercation between Mr. Francis and Mr. Pitt, relative to the production of some improper and irrelevant evidence before the committee by the former, Mr. Windham opened the sixth charge respecting Fyzoolakhan, the Rajah of Ram-pore. The committee divided; for the question 96; against it 37. The house being resumed, Mr. Pitt expressed his wish, that before the house adjourned, a day might be fixed for bringing up the report of the committee; and in consequence, Monday, the 2d of April was chosen. Upon that day, previous to the bringing up of the report, Mr. Sheridan opened the seventh charge, relative to the corrupt receiving of bribes and presents.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and desired that a clause of the act of 1773 might be read. It was accordingly read, as follows:—"No governor-general, nor any of the council, shall, directly or indirectly, accept, receive, or take, from any person or persons, or on any account whatsoever, any present, gift, donation, gratuity or reward, pecuniary or otherwise,

or any promise or engagement for any of the aforesaid."

The preceding abstract having been read, Mr. Sheridan begged leave to call to the recollection of the committee the favor which a right honorable friend (Mr. Burke) had conferred upon him, when he informed them that it was his (Mr. Sheridan's) intention to use as much brevity in opening the charge upon the subject of the presents, as possible. In this declaration his right honorable friend had certainly spoken his sentiments; and as a part of the evidence given during the course of the preceding Friday, threw a decided light upon some of the facts which were, previously to the intervention of that complete elucidation, in some degree, obscured and doubtful; he felt, with redoubled force, his early and indisputable conviction, that brevity and perspicuity were the only matters necessary to imprint the truth of the facts contained in the charge upon the perceptions of the committee; and to press home to their minds a lively and indignant sense of the enormity of the crimes of Mr. Hastings, as exemplified in these several and distinctly alleged accusations, if either the one or the other point remained yet to be accomplished. Honored, upon a former occasion, with the almost unprecedented indulgence of the committee, he would not offer so ungrateful a return to the liberality of their feelings, as to suppose that they would not do him the justice to believe that it was far indeed from any great willingness on his part that he had been induced to trespass a second time upon their patience; but, when he remembered that it would ill become him to refuse his feeble aid to those who had, with equal zeal, in this momentous cause, stepped forward, as much as it was possible, under the inevitable restraints of an attention divided by occupations more multiplied and varied than his own;—when he considered the importance of the proceeding with respect to the impeachment of Mr. Hastings;—when

he reflected how much the character of that house and its honor, and (what was still more material) the honor and the justice of the country, were implicated in the business;—when he consulted his own serious and sincere feelings on the subject—he could not refuse to lend himself to the occasion, and discharge his duty, by exerting his best endeavors to accelerate the progress of this interesting business, by assisting to draw it nearer to that conclusion, of which the distance appeared, at last, considerably diminished. The subject which, at present, demanded an investigation, was necessarily much colder and drier than that which, upon a preceding occasion, he had been so liberally permitted to state to the committee. No horrible accounts of the sacrilegious plunder of defenceless parents, were now to be addressed to their painfully-excited notice; no enumeration of barbarities, perpetrated against the aged and guiltless mothers by their unnatural offspring;—but the narration was nevertheless equally, if not still more important; as it went to establish the stubborn fact, that corruption had been the leading principle of all the actions of Mr. Hastings in India!—though Heaven forbid that Mr. Hastings should prove guilty to the extent set up by his friends, in what had been denominated his defence! Perhaps more hostile, than truly serviceable, was the anxiety with which the advocates of this gentleman met the deserved attack upon his flagrantly-reprehensible administration in the East Indies. They seemed mortally to have wounded the cause, by the rash eagerness which they discovered to support it; and by the firmness with which they were determined to bring resistance against every endeavor to assail it. They appeared unwilling to admit, that Mr. Hastings in India was a man of unbounded power; and that by this power he kept the whole body of natives in awe and terror. Once, indeed, (Mr. Sheridan added,) he thought him free from the vices of avarice and corruption; but, now,

he had changed his opinion. These most unfortunate vindicators—themselves demolishing their own frail plans of exculpation—had, indeed, already anticipated the accusation in that house; and in no particular did their zeal so far outstrip their discretion. Such rash defenders of his conduct—aware that scarcely any attainment was wanting except a conviction of the receipt of presents, and of an accumulation of private douceurs, to blacken the catalogue of his crimes, and to destroy all those pretensions which could in the minds of men soften their asperity, and allay their indignation at his enormities; had violently affirmed that Mr. Hastings did not amass treasures for his own use—was not corrupt for interested purposes; and although, perhaps, improvident and profuse, was not mercenary; and, by a natural consequence, not rich. But it indispensably behoved them to go beyond the frivolous attempt to establish such positions by mysterious excuses, and language so implicated, as to become nearly unintelligible. They should have placed their vindications of him upon the broad and immoveable corner-stone of truth; upon down-right fair and absolute proofs; and this the more especially, because, if the points for which they, with so blind a vehemence had contended, were open to the admission of proofs, the means of introducing them were certainly in their power. Vainly, indeed, had these imprudent friends of Mr. Hastings exerted the faculties of their invention, to puzzle and to confound the mind—nor was it astonishing that such extraordinary pains had proved the cause of raising a proportionate suspicion; for in this, as in the generality of similar instances, when genius became racked under the consciousness of guilt, the ardor of defence left its propriety at an irrecoverable and shameful distance. There was an infirmity—a weakness—a something not to be described in human nature, which almost insensibly, led

men to think less of the foibles, or the crimes of such individuals, whilst it could be proved they had not been actuated by mercenary motives ;—that they had not proceeded upon a principle of personal avarice ; and that the increase of their own private property had not been the object of either their rapacity, or their oppression. Swayed and influenced by this sort of weakness, Mr. Sheridan declared he had been among those, who, at one time, conceived that Mr. Hastings was not stimulated in his conduct, as Governor-General, by any view to his own emolument ; and that his fortune was trifling, compared with the advantages which fell within his power. But the more close and minute investigation which it was his duty to apply to the facts contained in the charge, had completely altered his opinion ; and he scarcely harboured even the slightest doubt of being able to satisfy the committee, that Mr. Hastings had all along governed his conduct by corruption, as gross and determined, as his oppression and injustice had proved severe and galling. In reviewing his conduct, he had found it to spring from a wild, eccentric, and irregular mind. He had been every thing by fits and starts.—Now proud and lofty ; now mean and insidious ; now generous ; now just ; now artful ; now open ;—now deceitful ; now decided ;—in pride, in passion, in every thing changeable, except in corruption. In corruption he had proved uniform, systematic, and methodical ;—his revenge a tempest, a tornado, blackening, in gusts of pride, the horizon of his dominion ; and carrying all before it.

Mr. Sheridan added, that whilst he relied upon the power of exposing, fully to the view of the committee, the criminal proceedings of Mr. Hastings ; he could not avoid observing, that the nature of his private transactions was such as rendered it, in general, extremely difficult to drag them out into a full light. They were the deeds

of privacy, enveloped in a cloud of mystery. The committee (Mr. Sheridan said) would please to recollect the history of the act of 1773, which was passed with a view to deliver the princes of India, and the natives in general, from the consequences of the rapacity of the company's servants. They must well remember that it did, in the most clear and comprehensive terms which could be devised, prohibit all the said servants from receiving any present, gift, or donation, in any manner, or on any account whatsoever. That act, when it left the house of commons in the form of a bill, had no clause in it, authorizing the institution of a civil suit; but merely contained the authority and grounds of criminal prosecution of the parties accused of having violated positive injunctions. When the bill, however, came into the house of lords, although the commons had been satisfied with the fair prospect of a future security, and prevention of the evil which it held out; a noble earl, of the highest law authority, (Earl Mansfield) expressed a different opinion; and had deemed it so necessary to take all possible means of putting a stop to a practice so oppressive to the natives of India, and so disgraceful to the British name and character, that he inserted a clause, declaring that all presents accepted by the company's servants, on any account whatsoever, were the property of the company; not meaning it as a fund for their benefit, but only in order to found a legal title to a civil suit, upon what is termed a fiction of law. Thus strengthened, the bill passed, and went out to India. The construction, however, which Mr. Hastings put upon it was, that, by the regulating act of 1773, he remained at liberty to receive money, provided that it was to and for the use of the company; and, under this construction, he *did*, in a variety of instances, violate as clear and obvious an act of parliament as ever had passed—an act of parliament, concerning the legal meaning

of which, he (Mr. Sheridan) was persuaded there was scarcely a lawyer in the house who would stand up and declare, that he had at *any* time entertained the smallest doubt, or felt the least difficulty. It might be most unanswerably proved, from the words of Mr. Hastings, that even he, notwithstanding his ungovernable infringement of so positive and plain a law, considered the act as amounting, under all descriptions whatsoever, to an absolute prohibition. When Colonel Champion, in his letter written to this gentleman, requested to know from him whether he should be justified in receiving a present offered to him, the Governor-General answered, that the act was so strict and specific in its injunction, as to admit of no palliative—of no discretion on the part of the conduct of the servants of the East India Company; that it was so plain, it could not be misinterpreted; and so strict, it could not be infringed. And surely (said Mr. Sheridan) it was with this view only that the act was carried into a law by the British legislature, who could not mean to transfer to the company the exclusive privilege of that injustice, from which its servants were so strictly prohibited? It was a libel on the parliament, to think they could intend to confer such an illegal and despotic power. Mr. Hastings had also ventured to ask, whether, under the penalties denounced in the clause, it could, with the least shadow of reason, be concluded that, if he designed to violate it by recovering money for his own private use, he would either select as his agents the public officers of the East India Company—all men of established characters,—or pay the sums which he meant to appropriate to his own purposes into the treasury of the company? A totally overthrowing answer to this question would be involved in the proofs now ready to be offered to the committee, that Mr. Hastings had not suffered all the little sums which he took privately, either to pass through the hands of the public officers of the East India

Company, or to be paid into the treasury. On several occasions he employed his own agents;—if not, where was the possibility of accounting for his declaration to the Court of Directors, that the receipt of three lacks from Nobkissen might, if he had thought proper, have been concealed from their knowledge for ever? And thus it was that, with a disrespectful haughtiness, Mr. Hastings took the liberty to upbraid and censure the directors of the East India Company, for ever taking his conduct into consideration; or questioning *him* in respect to that which they had a right to know. He, besides, libelled them with the intimation that, unless they would connive at his keeping his share, they should not participate in the plunder. He urged them to say—“For taking the money, you are censurable; but, in applying it to our use, you are deserving of praise.” And such would virtually be their declaration (a species of logic well calculated to set his mind at rest!) if they granted him, on this head, that full and direct acquittal which he claimed and expected. Besides his plea of the construction of the act, which he set up in opposition to the obvious meaning of it, he vindicated himself in the transgression of his orders from the Court of Directors, whenever their sense could not be twisted, by the arguments of state-necessity. This necessity, however, which goes so far as to supersede all positive instructions, should be evident as well as urgent;—Mr. Hastings never attempted to prove the existence of the necessity. The doctrine of state-necessity, assigned in every case—this new and firm ally of self-interested rapaciousness—was not to be received on the present occasion; the point in question would not warrant the excess of his presumption, when pleading in the defence of his violation of a positive law. Whatever Mr. Hastings might have done with the money so extorted, was out of the question;—if he had applied it properly, the measure might be suffered to come forward here-

after in extenuation of his guilt; but, in the mean time, the committee were to look to his disobedience of orders—to his infringement of the act of parliament! Under this view of the procedure, it must be manifest, that every rupee which he received was taken in full defiance of the law; and that an action would lie against him for the recovery of the penalties. Much had been imputed by him to the generosity of the natives. He did not question this virtue in the natives of Hindostan, neither did he doubt the expertness of Mr. Hastings in working upon it most effectually; for, with so much power in his hands—with an army of fifty or sixty thousand men—he had most certainly the means of exciting in their breasts the flame of benevolence! As to the facts of corruptly taking presents, they naturally divided themselves into two heads: those which preceded the regulating act of 1773, and those which subsequently had arisen. He would begin with the latter, as they were more likely to elucidate the whole charge; and, first, he would mention the present of the year 1780, of two lacks of rupees, received of Cheit Sing, by the hands of his confidential servant Buxey Sadanund. The present was received in June, but never mentioned to the directors until the relation of the circumstances formed a part of the contents in Mr. Hastings's letter of November in the same year; and *then* it was not stated from whom the money came. In his defence, Mr. Hastings had, for the first time at the bar of the house, deposed that the money came from Cheit Sing; and that acknowledgment had, perhaps, been occasioned by his having learnt that an honorable member (Major Scott) had previously declared, when under examination before the select committee, that the money came from Cheit Sing. Mr. Sheridan now read Major Scott's examination; and commenting upon it, observed, that in one of the answers the honorable gentleman declared, he

believed Cheit Sing and the other native princes, would much rather give Mr. Hastings a present of two or more lacks of rupees, than pay them to the company, as part of their debt to the British government; a position which clearly proved (not the generosity of the native princes, but) that the government of India was founded upon a system of corruption. But, such (it had been urged) were the prejudices of the people!—Could it be seriously imagined (and this at a time whilst, as he should beg leave to impress again and again upon the minds of the committee; five lacks of rupees were due from that Rajah to the East India Company;) that, although the acceptance of the gift of the two lacks of rupees by the Governor-General of Bengal, was not, perhaps, attended with a promise of a relaxation in the enforcement of the company's demand, no *friendly* and *seducing* hint had been given of so generous a design? A raw and artless negociator might not, indeed, have thought of any compromise; but have pursued the obvious line of conduct to one not half initiated into the practices of extortion.—Such ignorance of the true methods of procedure could not, without injustice, be imputed to Mr. Hastings! The boon with which this gentleman was privately presented, did not, however, divert his indefatigably faithful zeal from the prosecution of the demand of the East India Company; yet, at the same time, it must be confessed, so valuable a gift was no inconsiderable drawback from the pecuniary powers of the Rajah to satisfy such a demand. And, indeed, the facility with which this plundered individual was made to submit to private extortion, only rendered him a more convenient tool to work upon in every case of public depredation. Two lacks of rupees might be considered merely as a palatable whet to the voracity of his appetite; and more money was the great cure in view, for an inveterate disorder; when that wretched invalid,

Sir Elijah Impey, underwent a dangerous and most fatiguing journey, purely for the benefit of his health ! With regard to the readiness of the native princes, to make presents ; let a Governor-General, possessed of all the powers of government, and at the head of an army consisting of 60,000, and sometimes of 100,000 men, led and commanded by European officers, throw himself on the bounty of a people ; and doubtless, (as he before remarked) an unbounded spirit of benevolence would prevail. — But to return to the present of Cheit Sing.

In his defence, Mr. Hastings declared, that in 1780, he had formed the plan of drawing Mhadajee Scindia from Guzzerat, to the defence of his own dominions, in hopes of laying the foundation of peace with the Mahrattas ; but that the plan had been opposed by an honorable gentleman (Mr. Francis) on account of the additional expense which it would occasion. About that time, Cheit Sing sent his confidential servant, Buxey Sadanund, to Calcutta, to endeavour to procure a remission of the payment of the annual sum of five lacks of rupees, which the board had fixed as his proportion of the expenses of the war. That request, Mr. Hastings peremptorily refused ; but assured Sadanund, that on the restoration of peace, the annual subsidy of five lacks should be discontinued. Sadanund wrote to his master, and received a commission from him to give Mr. Hastings the strongest assurances of his future obedience and submission to the orders of government ; and he was farther directed to request his (Mr. Hastings's) acceptance of two lacks of rupees as a present for himself. His reply was, that he cordially received his submission and assurances of obedience ; but that he must absolutely refuse his present, which he *did*. This (Mr. Sheridan said) was a sentence in which the words, as the fact afterwards proved, were a *little* transposed ; for the truth was, that Mr. Hastings cordially received the present, and absolutely refused to accept Cheit Sing's submission and obe-

dience ; since, it appeared, that on the 20th, Mr. Hastings sent for Sadanund, and told him he had re-considered his master's offer, and would accept the two lacks of rupees ; and the very next day (the 21st) he entered the minute under the authority of which the persecution of that unfortunate prince was begun, and from whence it was pursued to his ruin. Other men, perhaps, dissimilar in their views and temper from Mr. Hastings, might have deemed it necessary to return the gift at the commencement of hostilities against the Rajah : but the Governor-General, still inviolably faithful to the great principle of his system of speculation, resolved not to lower his importance by giving back that money which he had once *so condescendingly* agreed to accept ! And, here, his proud and surly dignity broke out in all its plenitude ! Having taken a sum against law, although the purpose for which he grasped at it was frustrated, he scorned either to acknowledge the fact, or to relinquish the money. The reason of this was obvious. Finding Cheit Sing so easy a dupe to private extortion, Mr. Hastings instantly marked him out as an object for public plunder. Having stated this transaction, Mr. Sheridan took notice of (what he stiled) the strange manner in which Mr. Hastings had acted with respect to this present. To read the whole of the correspondence with gravity, was, he declared, utterly impossible ; for such a mixture of the diverting and the disgusting, appeared in almost every letter, that the effect was at once most laughably ludicrous, and most seriously alarming. But, he would just turn to an extract or two relative to the case in point. Mr. Sheridan then read a part of Mr. Hastings's letter of November 1780, as follows : " My present reason for reverting to my own conduct on the occasion which I have mentioned," (his offering a sum of money for the company's service) " is to obviate the false conclusion, or purposed misrepresentations, which may be made of it, either as an artifice of ostentation, or the effect of

corrupt influence, by assuring you, that the money, by whatever means it came into my possession, was not my own." Mr. Sheridan commented on this, and then stated the conduct of the directors respecting it, in all whose letters concerning presents, were (he said) to be found declarations to this effect, "forasmuch as you have taken presents, we greatly *disapprove* of your conduct; but, inasmuch as you have applied those presents to the credit of our account, we highly *approve* of your conduct." It seemed evident that, upon one occasion, nine lacks of rupees had been received, and only six lacks brought into the treasury of Calcutta: the remaining three were not yet accounted for; unless it could be thought a sufficient elucidation to declare that they were in the hands of Cantoo Baboo—Mr. Hastings's black bribe broker. But, was it probable that this man, absolutely dependent upon the Governor-General, and having amassed an immense fortune under his auspices, could have retained so large a sum of money within his hands? No! suspicion naturally, not to say unavoidably, turned round to the principal. Yet, in their letter of January, 1782, the directors did not appear to be satisfied with Mr. Hastings's account of the whole proceeding, but pronounced it at once extraordinary and mysterious. That it was mysterious, was undoubtedly true; for in such facts as taking of presents, and the mode of applying them to the company's use, he would venture to assert that there could be no mystery without the excitement of a just suspicion of guilt. The directors in their letter observed, "It does not appear to us, that there could be any real necessity for delaying to communicate to us immediate information of the channel by which the money came into Mr. Hastings's possession, with a complete illustration of the cause or causes of so extraordinary an event." And in the same letter, speaking of this sum taken from Cheit Sing, and of other monies of a similar description, they said,

“We shall suspend our judgment, without approving in the least degree, or proceeding to censure the conduct of our Governor-General for this transaction.” The next time the directors heard any thing more of this, was by a letter, dated the 22d of May, 1782, as Mr. Larkins had sworn; but not sent till the 16th of December in the same year; and singular was the fate of this letter of the Governor-General, which had, in so *extraordinary* a manner been delayed in India! This letter, Mr. Larkins, with officious care, would not deliver until the very moment in which the ship sailed, because he well recollected that letters had been either forgotten or mislaid, if given to the captain long before the departure of the vessel. The Resolution was the last ship of the season dispatched for Europe; but it was not sufficiently well manned to carry the Governor-General’s letter, although the Governor-General declared, that his *good genius* had dictated its contents. The Resolution was thought safe enough to bring him a rich freight, many valuable bills and bonds, and a variety of important letters and dispatches; but had the Governor-General’s letter been put on board the vessel, such a weighty cargo would undoubtedly have sunk her to the bottom of the ocean. That packet could only be brought home securely in the Lively. It should appear, therefore, that there was something in the very name of the ship which lent the letter safety, and adapted itself to its style and contents: and yet this most unlucky letter appears, indeed, to have met with as many strange and unexpected disappointments as that written by the miserable Romeo, and intrusted to the care of Friar John.

How equally unfortunate, also, must it have proved, if the Lively had been absent upon any other station. Some impure article might probably have made its way into the hold of the ill-manned and crazy Resolution! The superstitious piety of Mr. Larkins, might, perhaps, have inclined him to ap-

prehend, that in such a case, the Resolution would have foundered—have sunk perhaps in the Ganges, without even one convenient diving negro near to rescue the important letter from the devouring waves! Yet, even thus rescued, the letter might have suffered under a total and dreadfully irremediable obliteration of its interior contents, with not one single vestige of writing left, excepting the address: and, after all, (intrepid though the sailors are) the Resolution had not a crew sufficiently *daring* to venture upon carrying to England the *justification* of Mr. Hastings!

On this occasion, it seemed fair to say, why not send the letter to Madras, for the chance of a ship from that settlement? Mr. Larkins dispatched this letter from the country, and to Mr. Auriol, the Secretary at Calcutta; yet, he would not touch it, but caused it to be returned, declaring that it was contrary to the act of parliament for any of the company's servants to write home to the directors. Thus it failed in one instance. Mr. Sheridan stated how it had failed in others, and traced all the circumstances which had tended to impede its being dispatched by the Resolution, till just on the eve of its being sent away, Mr. Larkins advised Mr. Hastings to open it, in order to suffer him to make an affidavit, that it was written on the 22d of May; and to let the affidavit accompany it. Mr. Larkins accordingly took an affidavit before Mr. Justice Hyde, that the letter had been written by him on the 22d of May, from rough draughts, furnished by Mr. Hastings. This was a proof that Mr. Hastings thought the letter of the most serious importance to himself; and that it was extremely material for him to establish the fact, that it had not been written on the pressure of the suspicion, but that the mean imputation to which the delay exposed him, from the occasion which the late parliamentary inquiries had furnished, was a matter to be regarded by him as singularly unfortunate. Undoubtedly the run of much ill

luck had gone against him ; and so unpromising were appearances in his favor, that it did not require any great share of incredulity to suspect that the letter was written, not before, but after he had heard of certain changes in the politics of this country ; which might make him at length adopt a new opinion, with respect to the best artifice for his own security ; and conceive that a voluntary confession would prove one of the least fallible preservations from detection. The conduct of Mr. Larkins, most certainly, was suspicious ; and Mr. Sheridan said, he trusted that no person would do *him* the injustice to conceive that he harboured cruel, and, of course, unworthy notions against mankind, when he observed that he saw the workings of gratitude so powerful in the hearts of individuals, as to eradicate every other feeling of duty. Mr. Larkins had taken the most extraordinary pains to acquit his friend and patron, Mr. Hastings. How well his efforts succeeded, the committee must determine. Mr. Sheridan now remarked, that he should beg leave to enter upon a short investigation of the second money transaction, which Mr. Hastings had represented as having some affinity with the former *anecdote* ; and this was a demand upon the council for money of his own, described as having been expended in the company's service, to the amount of thirty-four thousand five hundred pounds, for which he had desired to have three bonds ; and, here, it seemed necessary to refer to the defence of Mr. Hastings respecting the circumstances of this transaction. In that defence, the Governor-General stated, that being in the year 1783 in actual want of a sum of money for his private expenses, owing to the company's not having at that time sufficient cash in their treasury to pay his salary, he borrowed three lacks of rupees from Rajah Nobkissen, an inhabitant of Calcutta, whom he desired to call upon him with a bond properly filled up ; that Nobkissen *did* call ; but, when Mr. Hastings was going to execute it,

Nobkissen entreated that he would rather accept the money than execute the bond. In short, that he neither accepted the offer, nor refused it ; but kept the Rajah, during the space of several months, plunged into a state of the most tormenting anxiety. And now it might seem reasonable to imagine, that, at last, the matter dropped ;—quite the contrary ; Mr. Hastings took the money, but neither gave the bond, nor was *mean* enough to think of returning the money ; his pride forbade it ; it was a fresh proof of the dread which the natives entertained of the Governor's pledge of faith. " Take my money, and welcome, said Nobkissen ; but place me not within the *peril* of your promise ; pledge not your faith to me ? I know too well the consequences ; I have heard of the treaty of Chunar ; I have heard of the usage of Fyzoolah Khan ! I have heard of other *shameful* circumstances which followed the *most solemn* engagements of the Governor-General of India !"

Thus did Mr. Hastings fill the breast of this unfortunate man with painful apprehensions, lest when he returned home he should find a bond thrust, perhaps, underneath his door at midnight, or by some unworthy stratagem placed upon his table. He knew too well, that all who had been honoured with his favor became irrecoverably ruined. His various guarantees, his treaties, and his sacred compacts, with every lamentable consequence, were present to his afflicted imagination. The rapacity of Mr. Hastings he could tolerate ; but he shrunk with horror from his protestations and his pledge of faith ; a most unanswerable proof, that of all the monied men plundered by the Governor-General, Nobkissen entertained the truest notions of his character. In mercy, however, Mr. Hastings came away from Calcutta without acting so *cruelly* as to send Nobkissen the bond ; or so *pitifully* as to repay the money ; and, upon this occasion it ought to be recollected, that Nobkissen was notoriously the

most avaricious *black-man* in Bengal: but, in the description of this insatiable thirst for money, it was not meant to draw an *invidious* comparison between the Rajah and a *disinterested* European! He would not insist on the unprecedented charge of contingent expenses for a period of more than twelve years; nor on the particulars of this charge, which was principally for translating the Mahomedan laws, which he had destroyed, and other services of a nature equally useless. In that famous letter which, in his progress to Lucknow, he wrote to the Directors, he had the assurance to request that this sum might be allotted to his use, that he might not be doomed to poverty and obscurity, after a life spent in the accumulation of *crores* for their advantage. But he had gone farther; he had taken it upon himself to place this sum to his credit without the consent of the Company; thus *paying, contrary to law*, a debt which he had contracted *against authority*! This proceeding could not be justified by Mr. Hastings, even on the principles which he had himself laid down in his construction of the Regulating Act: for here he must acknowledge that he had taken money *privately*, which he did not apply to the use of the Company, but to his *own*; as, whether he seized it in the first instance, or paid it to himself afterwards without authority, it was exactly the same. Hitherto nothing arose, excepting *mystery* and *obscurity* in the transactions, and in the defence made by the Governor-General; but if the Committee were disposed to think (as he conceived they might be inclined) that no circumstances could exceed those to which he adverted, they were mistaken—for, all was *simplicity* and *plain dealing* itself, when compared with what followed!

Mr. Sheridan now remarked, that he should next offer to the consideration of the Committee a *manœuvre* (of which the particulars were not included in the charges) for the *humane* purpose of squeezing ten lacks of rupees from the Nabob Vizier, at

Chunar. The circumstances of this transaction had been too recently discussed to render much additional information necessary. This *generous* act was to assume the *curious* form of the refusal of an offer which the Vizier was *supposed* to have made! Mr. Middleton, the resident appointed by Mr. Hastings;—Mr. Middleton, who had gone *such* lengths with him before, on a sudden became conscientious; and, like a tick with a *plethora* of blood, was satiated with plunder:—quite gorged, and torpid! Even *he* wrote to Mr. Hastings, that he could not think of accepting this offer, (which, however, the Nabob had *not*, at any time made) and Major Palmer was actually sent to *persuade him not to keep the resolution to which he had come*, of presenting Mr. Hastings with another 100,000*l.*—thus by a kind of ingenuity, by a perversion unknown in this *dull* climate, conveying a *demand for money* under the form of *declining to accept it*! Concerning this circumstance, it appeared reasonable to remark, that when Major Palmer and Major Davy called upon the Nabob for the money, the latter declared that he had *never* before heard that so extraordinary a demand was in contemplation! And how deeply must the merciful feelings of the Committee become wounded, should they advert to the contents of a letter, from this unfortunate and persecuted prince, to Mr. Hastings, in which, painting in the strongest colours his extreme distress, he complains bitterly of the exaction; yet says, “*being remediless*, I felt myself obliged to comply with what was required;” and then he concludes with this artless and affecting observation; “Blessed as I am with so *compassionate* a friend as your Highness, how does it happen that I am reduced to such a state of miserable distress?” On this occasion Mr. Sheridan said, that he must beg leave to enforce strongly upon the attention of the Committee, that the reasons advanced to justify the *seizure* (for it was far from meriting a milder term) of the 100,000*l.*—

the time when it was paid,—the manner in which it was paid,—and the persons to whom it was paid, had been all brought into full view ; and unanswerably stigmatised as the falsest statements by the Governor-General. He had written word to the Directors, that the exigency of his affairs,—the want of cash to pay the army, and other things pressing, had caused him to accept the present of ten lacks of rupees, at the moment when he knew that the Nabob Vizier's affairs were in a state of the extremest indigence. Upon *that* ground he had vindicated the taking of the 100,000*l.* but it came out afterwards, in the most positive declaration, that he had not the sum in cash, but in bills on Gopal Das, not payable until the expiration of some succeeding months. If that was true, his *first* ground of justification failed him ; for the *immediate* wants of the army could acquire no relief from bills on Gopal Das, which had still several months to run. In the list of the persons to whom the money had been paid, the name of Mrs. Hastings was inserted. He should have felt (Mr. Sheridan added) great uneasiness at taking the liberty to introduce a lady's name in such a business, if it had not been for her complete exculpation ; but the fact stood thus. The entry of Mrs. Hastings's name, and those of the other persons, as the receivers of the sum, was a fallacy ; and it was equally a fallacy that the ten lacks were paid by bills on Gopal Das ; because *that* man was at the time detained by Cheit Sing ; and let the Committee ask themselves, if the Governor-General would not have had more credit with Gopal Das than this miserable, moneyless, and ruined prince ? Great part of the sum given was paid in rupees ; and it was clearly a portion of the plunder of the unfortunate princesses, the mother and grandmother of Asoph al Dowlah. As to the Nabob, *his* distracted supplications were of no avail ; and his treasury was swept, without the least attention to his prayer, that his rapacious pillager would

leave him at least as much as might prove sufficient for the ordinary charges of his household.

Mr. Sheridan next stated the application of the Rajah of Berar, to the Governor-General and Council, for a sum of money to relieve his affairs, by paying his army; the whole amount of which sum was computed at sixteen lacks of rupees. This application was rejected as inconvenient to be complied with; but afterwards the Governor-General took the whole responsibility of the measure upon himself, and lent the Rajah of Berar three lacks.

Mr. Sheridan now mentioned the complaint laid before the council board by the Rajah Nundcomar, and the 15,000*l.* taken from Munny Begum, to whom was intrusted the sole collection of the revenues. The Directors had instructed him to appoint a *minister* (a *guardian*!) to superintend Mohareck ul Dowlah, the young Nabob of Bengal; and to manage his affairs. The person whom he chose for this employment was the step-mother of the Nabob, and widow of the deceased Nabob, Myr Jaffier, (an ignorant woman, drawn originally from the lowest class of life, and by Mr. Hastings from the recesses of the Zenana) to instruct her princely pupil in all the arts of future government! This curious appointment would certainly prove more the subject of indignation than surprize to the Committee, when they should discover, from unquestionable authority, that it was assigned for the valuable consideration of 15,000*l.* to himself; and the same sum to Mr. Middleton. Mr. Hastings's transaction with Cawn Jewan Cawn was the next object of Mr. Sheridan's animadversion:—This man was appointed Phousdar of Houghly, with an income of 72,000 sicca rupees a year—of which Mr. Hastings was charged with taking half, besides 4000 allotted to his black broker: and the accusation was made, as well as that proffered by Nundcomar, in full council. The council proposed to inquire into the truth of it, and

required Cawn Jewan Cawn to answer to the facts upon oath ; to which procedure he and Mr. Hastings peremptorily objected ; and that Cawn Jewan Cawn, could not, by virtue of his religion, take an oath, was the weak excuse of Mr. Hastings ; but in the words used in the answer of Mr. Hastings to the charge, he might retort the falsity upon him. Cawn Jewan Cawn was, as a punishment for his contumacy, deprived of his employment ; but on the death of Colonel Monson, which gave Mr. Hastings, by virtue of his casting vote, a majority in the council, he was reinstated at the motion of the Governor. He left it to the reflection of the committee, whether any circumstantial proof—and the case would admit of nothing farther—could more clearly trace the guilt of Mr. Hastings, or establish the certainty of private practices of a corrupt nature between him and the Phousdar ? The whole was a studied maze of theft, bribery, and corruption ; unparalleled even in the most ignominious annals of East India delinquency. With respect to the unfortunate Rajah Nundcomar, *he* was first indicted for a conspiracy ; but *that* failing, he was tried on an English penal statute, (which, although rendered by a stretch of power most dreadfully forcible in Bengal, did not reach even to Scotland !) he was convicted and hanged for a crime (forgery) which was not capital in his *own* country ! Whatever were the circumstances of this judicial proceeding, (which might be the subject of another inquiry,) they could not fail of exciting apprehensions and terrors in the natives ; which would put a stop to all farther informations against the Governor. During this transaction, Mr. Hastings—in direct contradiction to the opinions of General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis—repeatedly asserted, that it was repugnant to the customs, either of the Mussulmen or Hindoos, to take an oath ; yet, on a later occasion, he justified himself in all his proceedings at Benares, by the affidavits of per-

sons of the religion which he mentioned, taken before the *upright* judge of the supreme court of Calcutta! It had been allowed, in the evidence given at the bar, that all India was in consternation at the event; and considered the death of Nundcomar as a punishment for having advanced charges against Mr. Hastings. Who, after *such* an event, would dare step forward as his accuser? None would venture;—and the Governor might, in future, pillage the natives as he thought proper, without any fear of being disturbed by their invocations for justice! But this justice, he hoped and trusted, would not be refused in a British parliament;—they owed it to their own dignity, to the support of the resolutions into which they had already entered, to the honour of the country, the prosperity of the government, and the rights of humanity! The present charge (he should beg leave to repeat) was not, perhaps, of that nature which came home most effectually to the feelings of men; it could not excite those sensations of commiseration or abhorrence which a ruined prince, a royal family reduced to want and wretchedness, the desolation of kingdoms, or the sacrilegious invasion of palaces, would certainly inspire! In conclusion, (Mr. Sheridan observed,) that, although within this *rank*, but infinitely too fruitful wilderness of iniquities—within this dismal and unhallowed labyrinth—it was most natural to cast an eye of indignation and concern over the wide and towering forests of enormities—all rising in the dusky magnificence of guilt; and to fix the dreadfully-excited attention upon the huge trunks of revenge, rapine, tyranny, and oppression;—yet it became not less necessary to trace out the poisonous weeds, the baleful brushwood, and all the little, creeping, deadly plants, which were, in quantity and extent, if possible, more noxious. The whole range of this far-spreading calamity was sown in the hot-bed of corruption; and had risen, by rapid and mature growth, into every species of

illegal and atrocious violence! Upon this ground, most solemnly should he conjure the committee to look to the malignant source of every rooted evil; and not to continue satisfied with reprobating effects, whilst the great cause enjoyed the power of escaping from merited crimination, and the infliction of a just punishment. He now moved, "That the committee, having considered the present article of charge of high crimes and misdemeanors against Warren Hastings, esquire, late governor-general of Bengal, is of opinion, that there is ground for impeaching the said Warren Hastings, esquire, of high crimes and misdemeanors upon the matter of the said article."

Major Scott in his defence, among other arguments, urged the favorable reception Mr. Hastings, after the supposed commission of all these crimes, had met with on his return home, both from his masters, the directors of the company, and several members of administration. Lord Mulgrave reprobated what he termed a shabby species of defence. Mr. W. Grenville declared his concurrence with the honorable member who had opened the charge, in almost every point he had urged; he also observed, that upon the present occasion, he could not resist a most justifiable and even necessary attempt to save Mr. Larkins from what he thought rather too harsh treatment; and declared that he had ever understood that gentleman to be a man of strict honor and unimpeachable integrity; and by no means capable of wilful perjury; though he had certainly, through a mere and obvious inadvertency, sworn fully, instead of swearing to the best of his knowledge respecting Mr. Hastings's letter of the 22d of May, 1782, not having been opened since he had parted with it out of his hands.

Mr. SHERIDAN begged leave to remind the right honorable gentleman who spoke last, that of all insinuations whatsoever, that which might have fixed upon the minds of the committee, even the shadow of a suspicion that Mr. Larkins had proved guilty of corrupt and wilful perjury, was the most distant from his idea. The whole of what he meant to intimate was, that an incontrovertible fact stood forward, which, in its nature, ascertained that Mr. Larkins deposed, upon oath, to the truth of some points, which, most certainly, did not

fall within his own immediate knowledge; and doubtless, it was fair for him (Mr. Sheridan) to take this justifiably-drawn conclusion, in aid of such proofs, as it became requisite to establish from the letter in question. Mr. Sheridan trusted, that it was scarcely necessary for him to add, that the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Grenville) could not possibly suppose, that if any solid ground for a charge of perjury had existed, he would not have made it openly; and in that spirit of disdain with which no man considered the base darkness of insinuation more heartily than himself.

Mr. Grenville answered, that he could assure the honorable gentleman, that it was far from his meaning to impute any such charge to him; but barely to say, what he still thought, that the drift of his argument did not stand in need of the introduction of his pleasantry concerning Mr. Larkins and the letter. As to the rest, he rejoiced to find that the honorable gentleman had, with his habitual candor, so satisfactorily explained his meaning.

Upon a division, there appeared for the question 165; against it 54. The house being resumed, the report from the committee was brought up by their chairman. An adjournment of the debate was moved; which was afterwards waved on a proposition being made for bringing up the report afresh. The latter being agreed upon, the house adjourned.

APRIL 3,

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

The order of the day being read, for taking into farther consideration the report of the resolutions on the charges against Mr. Hastings, Major Scott observed, that he came to the house with an intention of opposing the resolutions being read a second time; but as a new mode of proceeding had been adopted, which would give him an opportunity of submitting what he had to offer to the consideration of the house, prior to the vote of impeachment, he should reserve himself until that time. Mr. Burke said, that the friends of Mr. Hastings would do right to take their own time for urging such arguments, as, in their opinion, were most likely to serve their cause.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that he thought it fair to apprise the honorable gentleman (Major

Scott) that he could not have a better opportunity of arguing the merits of Mr. Hastings, by way of set off, than the present. If the merits of Mr. Hastings, were to be measured against his criminality, the fairest, and indeed, the only mode to enable the house to do so, at the proper stage of the proceeding, would be for the honorable gentleman then to go into a statement of those arguments on the merits, which he meant to use. In that case, it might be found necessary for the gentleman on the side of the house where he sat, and all those who had voted for the charges, to call for papers, in order to repel the weight of those arguments which the honorable gentleman might urge; or to do away the impression which they, or the evidence of any witnesses whom the honorable gentleman should think proper to call, might make upon the minds of the house. This could only be done, by the honorable gentleman's entering into argument at the present moment; because, if he did so at any subsequent period, it would have an unfair effect on the charges; and the house would not be able to give the mass of criminality, already established, its due weight. In order to exemplify this, Mr. Sheridan put a variety of hypothetical cases, to shew the manner in which not stating the argument on the merits of Mr. Hastings, as a set off then, might possibly operate as a disadvantage against the supporters, of the charge, who were to measure the merits against the guilt. Different gentlemen had settled in their own minds different scales of the criminality of Mr. Hastings; by which each individual would naturally measure guilt and its merits; and balancing the one against the other, decide accordingly. Suppose, therefore the committee by whom the charges were to be put into proper shape and form, as articles of impeachment, to be sent up to the house of lords, should reduce the charges to two; was it to be imagined

that they would admit an unproved and alleged *quantum* of merit, against a proved and a substantiated guilt contained in two charges? Mr. Sheridan said, that he was surprised also, to find the right honorable gentleman opposite to him, did not urge the arguments, which he had declared he meant to bring forward, in support of those differences and distinctions, concerning which he had talked, as being entertained by himself, respecting some of the charges, and in particular, that relative to the contracts. He was at a loss to imagine, how the right honorable gentleman could possibly sit and hear the questions put upon the resolution relative to those charges; the motion upon which, specified distinctly and by name, among other grounds of criminality, Mr. Auriol's and Mr. Belli's contracts; to both of which, the right honorable gentleman had expressly objected. With regard to the charge relative to Benares, the right honorable gentleman had, in the course of his argument, stated some objections, though he had made no motion. This, therefore, appeared to him the fit opportunity for discussing those objections.

Mr. Pitt having remarked, that no person was better entitled than Mr. Sheridan to adhere strongly and pertinaciously to his own opinions, because no man was capable of forming them more judiciously, when he gave himself time to consider them; added, that it was the first time he ever recollected to have heard any member attempt to dictate to those from whom he expected opposition, to what stage of the proceeding that opposition should be applied.

Mr. Sheridan begged leave to assure the right honorable gentleman, that he by no means designed to arrogate to himself a prerogative which did not belong to him; much less to assume the right of dictating to any of the members, when they should urge such objections as they might mean to offer. He had, in fairness, risen to apprise the honorable gentleman (Major Scott) opposite to him, that if he, or any other friend of Mr. Hastings, meant to argue

the merits of Mr. Hastings by way of *set off* against his criminality, they could not take a more favorable opportunity than the present. He had assigned his reasons for entertaining that opinion; and that opinion he still continued most firmly to embrace. The remark, that he had tacitly conceded to the propositions of the right honorable gentleman the preceding evening, was certainly well founded; but he had not either recalled or violated that concession; for what is it, but an acquiescence, instead of insisting on putting the question, "That Mr. Hastings be impeached," as soon as the committee had agreed to the resolutions contained in the report, that the resolutions should be referred to a committee, to be by them put into proper shape as articles of impeachment. Had he, in the smallest degree, resisted that in his former argument? He certainly had not, but had merely argued upon the resolutions then about to be read a second time; and so far from that being contrary to any agreement or general understanding of the house, the reverse was the fact; for it had been generally understood, that the debate of that day was to have been put upon the resolutions; and a quarter of an hour before he rose, he had heard the honorable gentleman himself (Major Scott) observe, that he meant that day to have gone into much argument upon the subject. The right honorable gentleman had thought proper to make his complaints against being dictated to, as to the time most proper for him make his objections; but he (Mr. Sheridan) must still persist in saying, that after the right honorable gentleman's having moved an amendment to the resolution originally moved upon the charge relative to contracts, he knew not how the right honorable gentleman could sit in his place, and say, *Yes*, when the question was put upon it, thereby affirming, that Mr. Belli's and Mr. Auriol's contracts contained matter of high crimes and misdemeanors against Warren Hastings, Esq.

Major Scott observed, that much discussion having taken place relative to "setting off" the merits of Mr. Hastings against his supposed delinquencies, he begged leave to inform the house, that neither Mr. Hastings or his friends had the most distant idea of having recourse to such a mode of defence. The sentiments of Mr. Hastings upon that subject, he was authorized to submit to the house; and begged permission to read, as part of his speech, the following paper, which had been put into his hands for that purpose.

"Though it might be deemed presumption in me to declare any wish or expectation concerning the mode in which the house of commons may, in its wisdom or justice, determine to proceed in the prosecution of the inquiry into my conduct, now depending before them; yet, as it has been reported, that many gentlemen, members of that assembly, who have not chosen to give their constant attendance on the committee holden on this business, have expressed their determination of opposing the general question of impeachment, when it shall be brought before the collective body of this house; I hope I may, without irregularity, or the imputation of disrespect, intimate my sense of such a determination, both as it may respect that question, and the claim which I conceive I possess to attendance on the question upon the report, which in the due order of business will precede it.

"I presume, that in the present examination of my public conduct, there are two leading, and, as it appears to me, exclusive objects, of equal and reciprocal obligation; namely, that justice may be done to the nation in the redress or punishment of wrongs, which it may be eventually proved it has sustained by my acts; and that justice may be done to an individual, who may be eventually proved to have been wronged by unfounded accusations; and who even thinks that he has a claim to the applause of his country, for those very acts which have been drawn into crimination against him.

"If it shall be resolved by the honorable house of commons to agree to the report of the committee, that is to say, if it shall be resolved that there is ground for impeaching me for high crimes and misdemeanors, on the charges on which the committee have already passed that decision; I presume, that the resolution for the impeachment ought to follow of course, as the only means which can satisfy the justice of the nation in the supposition of my guilt, or clear my character in the supposition of my innocence. With regard to the first of these conclusions I have no claim: but for the last, I may, in common with the meanest of the subjects of this realm, assert my right to the benefit and protection of its laws; and, I trust, that the honorable house of commons, which has ever been considered as the guardian and protector of the laws, will not suffer my name to be branded with the foulest and blackest imputations upon their records, without allowing me at the same time the only legal means of effacing them, by transferring them for trial to the house of peers in the form of an impeachment.

"To this opinion I humbly beg leave to add my request, and it is the only request or application which I have hitherto permitted myself to make to any of the individual members of the house on the process

of this business, that if it shall be resolved on the report, that there is ground to charge me with high crimes and misdemeanors, they will afford me the benefit of their votes, though united with those of my prosecutors, that I may be brought to legal trial for the same.

“WARREN HASTINGS.”

The resolutions were afterwards read, and agreed to; and Mr. Burke moved, that they should be referred to a committee, to prepare articles of impeachment upon the same; and that the committee consist of the following gentlemen:—

EDMUND BURKE, Esq.
Right Hon. C. J. FOX
R. B. SHERIDAN, Esq.
Sir JAMES ERSKINE
Right Hon. T. PELHAM
Right Hon. W. WYNDHAM
Hon. St. AND. St. JOHN
J. ANSTRUTHER, Esq.
WM. ADAM, Esq.
M. A. TAYLOR, Esq.

WELBORE ELLIS, Esq.
Rt. Hon. FR. MONTAGU
Sir GREY COOPER
PHILIP FRANCIS, Esq.
Sir GILBERT ELLIOT
DUDLEY LONG, Esq.
Viscount MAITLAND
Hon. G. A. NORTH
General BURGOYNE
CHARLES GREY, Esq.

It was moved in the usual forms, that the committee be invested with the customary powers of calling for papers and witnesses, sitting where they pleased, &c. &c.; and it was agreed, on all hands, that it must necessarily be a secret committee. A division took place upon the nomination of Mr. Francis, against whom it was objected, that in India he had been personally at variance with Mr. Hastings; and he was rejected by a majority of 96 to 44.

APRIL 4.

CONSOLIDATION DUTY BILL.

The order of the day for the third reading of this bill having been moved and read, the bill was read a third time. Mr. Pitt brought up two clauses; and on the question being put “that the bill do now pass,” a debate ensued, in which

Mr. SHERIDAN contended, that the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had not yet answered his right honorable friend's (Mr. Fox) argument relative to the situation of this country and Spain. How awkwardly, he observed, would ministers be circumstanced, should a Spanish vessel offer herself at any of our ports, and be refused the same rates of duty at which French goods were admitted. In this case the court of Madrid would understand the

treaty of Utrecht to be broken. He next took notice of what had fallen from Sir James Johnstone, who, he said, spoke generally with a sort of Lacedemonian eloquence. What the honorable baronet had said jocosely of the treaty, with respect to its enabling them to get fine clothes, fine cambrics, and fine laces, and the wines of France to intoxicate their constituents, was in effect one serious reason of his disliking the treaty ; because it tended to put the country in a condition to forget her former situation, and lose sight of it altogether. Mr. Sheridan condemned the treaty on various accounts, and took occasion to mention (what he had on a former day hinted at) the absolute necessity of coming to some commercial arrangement with Ireland. He had been in hopes that the bringing forward that business would have been taken out of his hands by His Majesty's ministers ; but if it were not soon done, he desired to be understood as giving notice that he would, after the holidays, make a motion on the subject. It was impossible that the two countries should continue as they were, both looking with their faces full to France, and merely casting a sullen side glance at each other. He begged leave to remind the right honorable gentleman, that when the Irish propositions were in agitation, he had himself urged it as an argument for agreeing to them, that if an arrangement was not forthwith made with Ireland, we should force her into the arms of France.

The house divided, ayes 119 ; noes 43. The bill passed accordingly.

APRIL 19.

PAPERS RELATING TO PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to move for a variety of papers relative to the public accounts, and prefaced his motion with declaring, that he lamented he had been prevented from attending his duty in

the house on the preceding day, when the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) moved for leave to bring in a bill to enable the Board of Treasury to let a part of the collection of the post-horse tax out to farm. Mr. Sheridan said, that he did not lament his absence on account of the great degree of information which he had thereby lost, since he understood that the right honorable gentleman had not condescended to favor the house with a syllable on the subject; but merely embraced the opportunity of preparing the attention of the house to a matter of considerable moment. The idea of reviving a mode of collecting the public revenue by farming any part of it, led to consequences, of the extent of which the right hon. gentleman might not, perhaps, be sufficiently aware. It was impossible for it to be adopted under limitation; it must, if adopted at all, be adopted generally; and before the house consented to a measure of that magnitude, it behoved them to recollect, that the system of farming the public revenue had been long since, exploded, on account of its having been decided to be a system uncongenial with the constitution of this country, and by no means applicable to it. This (Mr. Sheridan said) he should take an opportunity hereafter more fully to argue; and at present, as the papers relative to the public accounts were but just printed and delivered, he submitted it to the candor of the right honorable gentleman, whether he would persist in his intention to open the budget on the immediately ensuing day, before it could be possible for gentlemen to have read the papers with sufficient attention to be able to make themselves fully masters of their contents. The papers for which he then meant to move (Mr. Sheridan added), he had expected the right honorable gentleman would have moved for himself.

Mr. Pitt answered, that what he should have to state to the house upon the morrow would prove extremely short. Mr. Sheridan did not seem to expect much information from the papers he moved for; but if he found any, he would have a full opportunity of making use of it on the report during the course of the Monday following.

APRIL 20.

WAYS AND MEANS.

The order of the day for receiving the report of the committee of ways and means being read, Mr. Gilbert brought up the report, which was read a first time, and the question put, "that this resolution be read a second time."

Mr. SHERIDAN begged leave to remind the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) that he had not fulfilled his promise, to give such an account of the finances as should afford perfect and complete satisfaction to the committee; but he had certainly fulfilled his promise of brevity: for he had been so extremely concise, that though he (Mr. Pitt) who was acquainted with all the grounds and circumstances to which the facts and figures which he had stated referred, could talk with familiarity and ease upon the subject without any farther explanation than that he had thought proper to give it, yet such brevity was rather an awkward circumstance to him and those, who, like him, were to answer and speak after the right honorable gentleman. Mr. Sheridan said, that he thought the air of triumph assumed by the right honorable gentleman, sat but awkwardly upon him, at a moment when he should have conceived another sort of demeanour would have better become the humiliating and mortifying situation in which he ought perhaps to feel himself; when obliged to come forward, and state the finances of the kingdom to be in so very different a condition, from that in which the committee had last year been so confidentially assured they would prove to be in 1787. The right honorable gentleman, and those who sat near him, would please to recollect the statement contained in the report of the revenue committee, which report he held in his hand, and the manner in which it was contradicted, when he advised them not to be too sanguine in their expectations; that because the year's receipt, ending January 5, 1786,

amounted to 15,397,471*l.* the year ending January 5, 1787, would turn out equally. He had, again and again, argued the fallacy of making out an account in such a way ; but what he said upon the subject had been rejected with a sort of unbecoming scorn. What he predicted had, however, proved true ; for now, instead of the flattering prospect which the right honorable gentleman held out, of our income equalling our expense, it was evident that the receipt of the last year fell 900,000*l.* short of the receipt of the year, ending January 5, 1786. On this assertion Mr. Sheridan grounded his reasoning, in order to impress the committee with the idea that ministers entertained a much more sanguine opinion of the state of our finances than their real situation warranted. He warned the committee, therefore, against giving way to delusion which might lull them into a dangerous inattention to the national circumstances, declaring that it was much more manly in ministers to state the real situation of the country, to look it in the face ; and, if more taxes were really necessary, to lay them on, burdened as the people were already. Mr. Sheridan animadverted upon the budget just opened, and said, admitting that the right honorable gentleman was correct in every one of his statements, still it was evident that there was a deficiency of 900,000*l.* compared to the amount of the total of the preceding year's ways and means. He declared his concern to hear the East India Company mentioned as a source of the right honorable gentleman's expectations, and that to so large an amount as 350,000*l.* That circumstance alone was sufficient to fill his mind with great doubt and suspicion of the soundness of all the various expectations which the right honorable gentleman had that day stated to the committee.

Mr. Grenville replied to Mr. Sheridan.

APRIL 23.

WAYS AND MEANS.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that notwithstanding the formidable dilemma into which the honorable gentleman, (Mr. Steele) who spoke last but one, had put the house, by declaring, that if they disliked the manner in which the minister had stated the articles of his budget, he wished they would come forward with their mode of calculation, and shew how the accounts ought to be made out; he certainly should persist in the exercise of his undoubted right to find fault with the minister's budget, wherever he saw, or thought he saw, cause of blame; and look for amendment to them, without feeling himself at all bound to suggest the means of it. Mr. Sheridan proceeded to call the attention of the house to the report of the revenue committee of last year, observing that the right honorable gentleman, who had been chairman to that committee, was not then in the house. (Mr. Grenville at that moment shewing himself Mr. Sheridan said, he begged pardon,—he saw the right honorable gentleman; and as he was forthcoming, he heartily wished his revenue might be forthcoming likewise.) He still persisted in maintaining, that the report to which he had alluded, was fallaciously made up, and that every one of the predictions which he had, in the course of the last year hazarded, as to the deficiency of the ways and means, were this year, fully verified and confirmed. The honorable Baronet (Sir Grey Cooper) who sat near him, had proved in a manner perfectly satisfactory to his mind, that there was a very great deficiency in the ways and means, as stated by the minister in the opening of the budget, on Friday; and the noble lord, (Newhaven) who had endeavoured to answer the honorable Baronet, certainly had failed in his attempt. Mr. Sheridan went over the articles of the supply, enumerating them seve-

rally, and distinguishing such as were voted, from such as remained to be voted; and dwelt for some time on the miscellaneous services. After going through the whole, he proceeded to notice the ways and means, which, he said, consisted of six articles. The first he mentioned was, the hundred thousand pounds, to be drawn from the cambric, and the consolidated duties. In making out that article, forty thousand pounds were taken by the right honorable gentleman for the duty on cambrics, which left 60,000 for the consolidation of duties; a sum for which he was altogether at a loss to account; since, when the right honorable gentleman stated his plan to the public, he had not taken credit for near so much, but had merely talked of eighteen or twenty thousand pounds.

Mr. Pitt said across the table eighty thousand.

Mr. Sheridan persisted that the sum mentioned by the right honorable gentleman had been no more than 18,000*l.* or 20,000*l.*; and that as likely to arise from the alteration of the fractions of sums payable for duties into integrals. But it was evident sixty thousand pounds had thus been levied upon the public in new taxes; and that in so silent and concealed a way, that he was convinced that house generally had been unapprised of the fact till that moment. This being the case, the right honorable gentleman had no right to boast of a surplus, without his being under the necessity of imposing new taxes. The next article of the ways and means was the most singular article to put into the minister's budget that he had ever heard of—it was two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for an expected increase of the customs, on account of a spring of trade. He ridiculed the idea of a spring of trade, and contended, that even if any great increase should take place, it must produce 650,000*l.* before it could yield the 250,000*l.* In order to explain this, Mr. Sheridan said, the reduction of the duties

on spirits and wines would make a deficiency of 400,000*l.*; and he argued, that the right honorable gentleman ought, when he let loose so large a portion of revenue, to have provided a substitute to have made good the deficiency. He objected to the 320,000*l.* expected to be paid by the East-India Company for the pay of the regiments of British troops serving in India, declaring his firm belief, that the company neither would nor could advance the money this present year. Notwithstanding the right honorable gentleman over the way (Mr. Grenville) had on Friday last declared, with so much confidence, that he had every reason to regard the affairs of the East-India Company as in a most prosperous and flourishing situation, and that he drew that opinion from the last accounts which came home from India, he was of a contrary opinion; and so much so upon the very ground where the right honorable gentleman had rested his opinion, the last accounts received from India, that he would move for those accounts to be laid before the house; and if the right honorable gentleman and his friends shrunk from that motion, the house would judge for itself, which assertion was most deserving of credit, that of the right honorable gentleman, or that which he had just made. Upon the whole of the ways and means there was a real deficiency; and however it might be glossed over, a day would arrive when the right honorable gentleman would wish he had ventured to come boldly forward with some decisive measure applicable to the real situation of the country. With regard to the army savings, and casual sums which might arise from the balances of accountants being paid in, and from the taxes being rendered more productive,—those the right honorable gentleman would find he ought not to reckon upon, if he considered that there were provisions sooner or later to be made on account of the Royal Family, the loyalists, and for other services, which must demand sums far larger than the

produce of the sums in question. He ought, therefore, not to persist in an over-sanguine opinion, that his resources were fully adequate to the possible expenses of the year, but manfully look the situation of the country in the face, examine it thoroughly, and meet it with an adequately bold and decisive measure, and not resort to little shifting practices of changing the mode of collecting this and that tax, so as to disturb the whole system of revenue collections, to the infinite vexation and perplexity of the subject, who was so teized and harassed by these perpetual alterations, that they scarcely knew what the taxes were that his money was demanded for, nor what the tax laws were under which he lived. Mr. Sheridan persisted in his former declaration, that the report of the committee of the last year had been delusive, and said, he had a proposition to offer, which was for the institution of a new committee; not a committee made up of paymasters of the forces, and the immediate friends and supporters of the minister, nor of men connected with party, but a fair and impartial committee, constituted of persons perfectly independent and unconnected politically. Such men were to be found in that house; and from a committee so constituted, the house might expect a just and authentic account of the real state of the finances of the country, upon which they might safely rely and proceed to ground such measures as were absolutely necessary to convince all the world, that they had really gone to the bottom of their affairs, and were determined to put them upon a proper footing. Mr. Sheridan read from the Journals, the string of resolutions relative to the report of last year's committee, which he had moved on the fourth of May last, all of which had been negatived, one only excepted. He reasoned upon these resolutions, and contended, that they had, every one of them, been verified by what had since happened. After offering to pledge his credit with the house, that the total of the supply for the two

next years, would amount to thirty-two millions, Mr. Sheridan concluded with moving, that the resolutions of the 4th of May last, might be read.

They were read accordingly as follows:

“ That the expected annual amount of the national income stated in the report of the select committee appointed to enquire into the public income and expenditure, appears in no respect to have been calculated upon the average receipts of any number of years, but is estimated upon the produce of one year only, and fixed at the amount of the same, with the addition of the probable increase upon the new taxes.

“ That it appears, that the amount of the annual expenditure as opposed to the amount of the public income so calculated, is not a statement of the present existing expenditure, or of that which must exist for some years to come, but it is formed upon the probable reductions which it is alleged will have taken place towards the end of the year 1791, in the prospect of a permanent peace.

“ That the different branches of revenue, in the period upon which the future is calculated, appear to have been singularly productive, particularly in the customs, and greatly to have exceeded the amount of the present year with which alone it is contrasted.

“ That it does not appear that any means were taken, nor information called for, nor any examination entered into by the said committee, in order to ascertain whether such increase of revenue had arisen from causes which were likely to have a permanent operation, or otherwise.

“ That such an investigation is indispensably necessary before this house can, with confidence, calculate by the produce of one year, the supposed future amount of the public income.

“ That the uncertainty of estimating, by such a criterion, the expected future produce of the revenue is still more evident, upon a comparison of the quarter ending the 5th of April last, with the same

quarter in the preceding year, upon which the future income is calculated, by which comparison it appears, that the amount of the latter quarter is inferior by the sum of 188,215*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* in the branch of the customs to the former.

“ That in the said report there are certain articles of receipt erroneously stated, as proper to be added to the future annual income, and other articles of expense, erroneously omitted, to be added to the expenditure.

“ That the total expected amount of the future annual receipt is stated in the said report to be 15,397,471*l.*

“ That the sums voted, and to be voted, for the service of the year 1786, including the interest and charges of the public debt, considerably exceeds that sum.

“ That the means by which the deficiency is to be made good, arise from aids and debts, which belong to the present year only.

“ That there is no surplus income applicable to the reduction of the public debt now existing.

“ That a surplus income in the ensuing quarters can arise only by the renewal of a loan for an extraordinary million, borrowed upon exchequer bills in the last, and charged upon the supply of the present year; and which loan it would be unnecessary to make, but for the purpose of procuring the said surplus.

“ That any extraordinary increase of exchequer bills, contrary to a former practice in the time of peace, is an expedient anticipation of that assistance which the government might receive in the case of any circumstance rendering it necessary to strengthen the state of our national preparation.

“ That the saving to the public upon the interest of money borrowed in this way, is rendered improbable or precarious, by the necessity which will arise for the more speedy issuing such bills, in order that the object for which the loan is made, may be punc-

tually and effectually answered; nor even should such savings accrue, will it compensate for the disadvantages above stated.

“ That, admitting that, by the foregoing means, the expected surplus will arise upon the three quarters next ensuing; and that henceforward one million annually is to be applied to the reduction of the debt; it appears, that there will then be an interval of nearly four years before the commencement of that permanent peace establishment, which is to furnish, in the reduction of services, £900,000 of the expected million surplus.

“ That, in this period, it appears, from the vouchers annexed to the said report, and other papers before this house, that a sum, amounting to £4,010,000, besides £2,000,000 due to the Bank—making together the sum of £6,010,000—will be deficient and wanting, over and above the stated annual income.”

Mr. Sheridan rose again, at a subsequent period of the debate, and said, he would confine himself merely to explanation. He then made a reply to the several reasonings of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and of Mr. Dundas. He charged the Chancellor of the Exchequer with having misrepresented his arguments; and said, he wondered, after what had now come out, that the right honorable gentleman was not ashamed of resorting to such old and hacknied means of opposing fair arguments, as talking of violated charters, and his right honorable friend's India bill. Could the right honorable gentleman deny, that the Court of Directors, the East India proprietors, and even the company's servants in India, now publicly declared, what had been admitted by his right honorable friend at the time, and what had also been said by him when the other bill was in agitation,—that his bill was a bold, a manly, and an avowed resumption, of power which had been abused; and that the right honorable gentleman's bill filched authority; and did that in a

covert, sneaking, underhand way, which the other bill did undisguisedly. Mr. Sheridan justified his former argument respecting Mr. Pitt's assertion, that about £18,000 or £20,000 would be the amount of the advantage resulting to the public from the consolidation of the duties; and appealed to the house, whether an idea had been entertained by them, when they passed the bill, that they were taxing the people to the amount of between £60,000 and £80,000 a-year. He answered what had been said to Lord John Cavendish's taking off the high duties on muslins; and said, that the right honorable gentleman had been forced to confess it to be a good measure; as its extremely beneficial consequences undoubtedly could witness. He had not complained of the right honorable gentleman's following that example; but of his having laid down a principle, and afterwards not acted up to his own principle;—a fact evinced by him, in respect to the loss of revenue, by the reduced duties on spirits and wine. Mr. Sheridan also took notice of what had fallen from Mr. Dundas; and said, he had addressed himself to a right honorable gentleman, (Mr. Grenville) and not to him, when he talked of moving for the last accounts from India; but that right honorable gentleman had chosen to avoid a reply. If his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox's) bill had passed, there would have been no necessity for a right honorable and learned gentleman (Mr. Dundas) to come to the house with his Indian budget; which he waited, as he had declared, to have properly shaped. They all understood what *shaping* East Indian accounts was; but that shaping would, as he had just declared, have been unnecessary, had his right honorable friend's bill passed; as one of its operations was, to have obliged the accounts of the company to be, from time to time, laid before the house. Mr. Sheridan again recurred to his proposition of a new, a fair, and an impartial committee,

to examine and report the real state of the revenue, and its expenditure.

Mr. Grenville replied. Mr. Burke exculpated the secret committee from the charge made upon them, by Mr. Grenville; and added, that so far from Mr. Sheridan being liable to it, he did assure the right honorable gentleman, that the committee had not been assisted by his honorable friend more than once, and then he had given them his company only for half an hour. Mr. Grenville admitted that Mr. Burke had fully cleared himself and the committee from the charge of having made an indiscreet use of their powers; instead, therefore, of Mr. Sheridan being liable to the suspicion that he had suggested of his speaking from too good information on the subject of the state of the company's affairs in India; it was evident he had spoken from no information at all.

Mr. Sheridan desired the right honorable gentleman, when he thought proper to argue upon the degree of information from which he (Mr. Sheridan) had spoken, to rest his arguments on what he admitted to be the information in his possession; and not on what any other person stated it to be. He alone could be a judge of the information in his mind, and the sources from whence that information was derived. The quarter, from whence he had learnt what he hinted at, was an indisputable authority; and such as he should not be ashamed to state to the house.

The resolution was read a second time and agreed to.

APRIL 26.

TAX ON POST HORSES.

Mr. Rose brought up the bill for farming the tax on post horses.

Mr. SHERIDAN having observed, that it would not be necessary to do more than take up a short time of the house, stated several arguments against the bill; and particularly contended, that the house could not delegate the powers of the executive government to others, who were not amenable to that

house. With regard to the ridicule which the right honorable gentleman had been pleased to throw upon the suggestion of an honorable gentleman, who sat on the bench with the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Bastard) with respect to the mode of ascertaining what the produce of the post-horse tax ought to be—by getting at an account of the number of horses kept by the innkeepers throughout the kingdom—there was nothing nearly so ludicrous in that, as in some of the modes of regulating the collection, and carrying some of the right honorable gentleman's own taxes into effect, which he had at different times proposed to the house. He remembered—among other most ridiculous ideas, which the right honorable gentleman had stated with respect to his horse tax—the obliging persons to put up the names, characters, and qualities, of the horses they kept, on the church-doors; and another, of stamping the accoutrements of the horses at the turnpike-gates, as they passed. The right honorable gentleman was so remarkable for disturbing, shifting, and changing the mode of collection of the taxes, that his desire to put the post-horse tax out to farm for a term of years, appeared to him as if the right honorable gentleman was so conscious of his own propensity to meddle with the collection of the taxes, that he knew he could not trust himself; and, therefore, he was determined to put it out of his power to touch the post-horse tax for three years to come. He could not otherwise account for his proposing a scheme so irreconcilable to the principles of the British constitution. What the right honorable gentleman had said respecting the excise, Mr. Sheridan admitted was perfectly just, when applied to the excise as a mode of collecting a part of the revenues, recognized by parliament, and established and existing in the country; but the case would have proved widely different, had there been no such thing as an existing excise. With respect to what had fallen

from an honorable gentleman, who had said that he would support the bill, because he did not think that there was any thing unconstitutional in its contents; but that he was a zealous friend to the constitution, and had resisted two bills, which he thought likely to affect the constitution in church and state; he presumed, he alluded to the good old cause of clamor, his right honorable friend's East India bill; and to the bill in favour of the dissenters, moved for by the honorable gentleman behind him (Mr. Beaufoy). If so, the honorable gentleman was welcome to his boast, and all the credit which belonged to it; but, undoubtedly, the bill then under consideration was a much more violent, as well as a more dangerous, attack on the constitution. Mr. Sheridan took notice of Sir Joseph Mawbey's declaration, that he had entertained sentiments of alarm and jealousy respecting the measure; but that he was now satisfied he might safely support it. The honorable baronet was the most easily satisfied of any man he ever heard of; for, what had fallen from the right honorable the Chancellor of the Exchequer?—nothing more than a desire, that gentlemen would wait till the bill was printed, and till they knew its contents, before they made up their minds upon it.

*The question was put, and the house divided; ayes 76; noes 39.
The bill was read a first time.*

APRIL 27.

**BILL FOR MORE EFFECTUALLY MANNING THE
BRITISH NAVY.**

Mr. SHERIDAN moved for leave to bring in a bill, respecting which, he said, he should have no occasion to trouble the house long; as the bill was, in some measure, the same with one which the house had entertained during the course of the last session, excepting that the obnoxious clauses were

left out. Mr. Sheridan declared, he had not himself made up his mind as to the whole of its present contents; but all he meant to do then was, to move for leave to bring it in; to have it read a first time, and printed; and then to leave it till the next session, for the consideration of gentlemen during the recess. He added, farther, that he should graft a plan upon it, for the advantageous employment of those youths who now led a life of infamy and idleness. Mr. Sheridan concluded with moving,

“ That leave be given to bring in a bill, more effectually to supply His Majesty's ships of war with seamen, when occasion shall require; and to encourage men, under certain regulations and bounties, voluntarily to engage themselves for that service, whenever they shall be duly called for.”

Mr. Brett complained of having been attacked and vilified in the newspapers, by the authors of the bill, by name, for the language which he held in that house respecting it as a member of parliament.

Such abuse he considered as an attack on the freedom of debate, and he had declared that he more than once had it in contemplation, to make a formal complaint upon the subject.

Mr. Sheridan assured the right honorable gentleman, that if he thought he had any hand in the newspaper attacks alluded to, he was mistaken. He considered the measure merely, and not the men, who were the authors and suggesters of it.

Lord Hood rose to combat some ideas which he conceived to be in the bill; and which, he said, he knew from experience could not be adopted without great inconvenience.

Mr. Sheridan begged leave to assure the noble lord, that no such ideas, as those to which his lordship had alluded, were contained in the bill. He begged, that gentlemen in general would suspend their opinions till the bill should be printed; and reminded the house, that he had declared, he had not himself made up his ideas to all the contents of the bill,

The question being put, the resolution was agreed to;

AFFAIRS OF THE PRINCE OF WALES.

On the 20th of April, previous to the opening of the budget, a subject was brought forward in the house, by Mr. Alderman Newnham, which had for some time before, strongly engaged the attention and feelings of the public;—namely, the embarrassed state of the finances of the Prince of Wales. The establishment of His Royal Highness's household, took place upon his coming of age, in 1783, during the Duke of Portland's administration. It is well known that a great difference of opinion subsisted, at that time, between the great personage with whom the final settlement of the affair rested, and the persons whose duty it was to give him their advice upon the subject, respecting the sum to be allowed for that purpose. Upon a full consideration of what was thought becoming the credit of the nation, and the exalted rank of the heir apparent to the throne:—the great encrease in the value of every article of expenditure, and the economy of such a liberal provision, as might totally supersede the necessity of incurring debt. The ministers of that day are said to have proposed that an annual income should be settled upon him by parliament of 100,000*l.* This proposition is said to have been not only entirely disapproved of by the King, but rejected with expressions of such marked resentment, as to make the immediate resignation of those ministers more than probable. In this emergency, the Prince of Wales, who had early manifested a favorable opinion of that party, interposed, and gave the world, upon this his first step in public life, a striking proof both of his filial duty, and public spirit. He signified his desire, that the whole business should be left to the King; and declared his readiness to accept of whatever provision the King in his wisdom and goodness should think most fit: and at the same time he expressed his earnest wishes that no misunderstanding should arise between the King, and his then ministers, on account of any arrangement in which his personal interest only was concerned. In consequence of this interference, the affair appears to have been accommodated; and an allowance of 50,000*l.* a year, payable out of the civil list revenue, was settled upon His Royal Highness. A very few years experience made it but too manifest that this provision was inadequate to the purpose for which it was designed. In 1786 the Prince was found to have contracted a debt to the amount of 100,000*l.* exclusive of 50,000*l.* and upwards, expended on Carlton House. The Prince was no sooner made acquainted with the embarrassed state of his affairs, and the great distress in which it necessarily involved a considerable number of his creditors, than he came to a resolution of taking some effectual measures for their relief. His first application was to the King his father; upon whose affection alone he wished to rely, and to whose judgment he declared his readiness to submit his part, and to conform his future conduct. By His Majesty's directions a full account of the Prince's affairs

were laid before him ; but from some dissatisfaction in the mind of his majesty, a direct refusal to afford him any relief was conveyed to His Royal Highness through one of the principal officers of state. In consequence of this refusal, the Prince appears to have conceived himself bound in honor and justice, to have recourse to the only expedient that was now left him. His determination was prompt and manly. The day after he received the message from the King, he dismissed the officers of his court, and reduced the establishment of his household, to that of a private gentleman. He ordered his horses to be sold; the works at Carlton House to be stopped; and such parts as were not necessary for his personal uses to be shut up. From these savings, an annual sum of 40,000*l.* was set apart and vested in the hands of trustees, for the payment of his debts. This conduct, however laudable it may appear, did not escape censure; it was represented as precipitate and disrespectful to the King; and was said to have been a principal cause of difference with His Majesty. An event which happened soon after, afforded a public proof of the displeasure he had incurred—viz. the danger to which His Majesty's life was exposed in August, 1786. Upon that occasion no notice whatever of the accident was conveyed to the Prince by the court. He learned it at Brighton, from the information of a private correspondent; he immediately flew to Windsor, where he was received by the Queen; but the King did not see him. It was impossible that the situation, to which the heir apparent to the throne was reduced, should be regarded with indifference, either at home or abroad; and what made the indignity of his condition the more generally felt and lamented, was, that no man was ever more highly qualified by distinguished affability, amiable manners, and a noble and liberal disposition to adorn the splendor to which his exalted birth entitled him. The Duke of Orleans, the richest individual in Europe, who was at this time upon a visit in this country, it is reported, pressed the Prince in the strongest manner to make use of his fortune, till some favorable change should take place in his circumstances, to whatever extent he might find necessary. This offer, though doubtless, generously intended; yet full of danger in its possible tendency to the public welfare, the Prince, from a nice sense of duty to the public, declined. The same public principle withheld him, also, from availing himself of those resources which the usurious speculations of monied men, are well known to keep constantly open in this nation to the temporary wants of the necessitous. It was in these circumstances of private distress and public spirit, that the expedient was suggested to His Royal Highness by several respectable members of the house of commons, of appealing to the justice and generosity of the nation in parliament. To this measure the Prince appears to have assented, not more from a natural wish to free himself from his pecuniary embarrassments, than from a desire to do away any bad impression, that the misfortune of having incurred the royal displeasure, and the consequent refusal of affording him any relief, might have left upon the

minds of the public. Accordingly, on the day already mentioned, 20th of April, Mr. Alderman Newnham demanded, in his place, of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it was the intention of His Majesty's Ministers to bring forward any proposition for rescuing the Prince of Wales from his present embarrassed and distressed situation. For though his conduct, under the difficulties with which he laboured, reflected the highest honor upon his character; yet he thought it would bring indelible disgrace upon the nation, if he were suffered to remain any longer in his present reduced circumstances. To this question Mr. Pitt replied, that it was not his duty to bring forward a subject of the nature that had been mentioned, excepting by the command of His Majesty; and that he had not been honoured with such a command. Upon this Mr. Newnham gave notice of his intention to bring the subject regularly, by a motion, before the house, on the 4th of May. In the mean time the friends of the Prince were indefatigable in their endeavors to procure the support of the independent members of parliament to the proposed motion; and at several meetings, which were held for that purpose, their numbers were so considerable as to give cause of serious alarm to the minister. On the 24th of April, Mr. Pitt, after requesting that Mr. Newnham would inform the house more particularly of the nature of the motion he intended to make, adverted to the extreme delicacy of the subject, and declared that the knowledge he possessed of many circumstances relating to it, made him extremely anxious to persuade the house, if possible, to prevent the discussion of it. Should, however, the honorable member persist in his determination to bring it forward, it would be absolutely necessary to lay those circumstances before the public; and, however distressing it might prove to him as an individual, from the profound respect he had for every part of the Royal Family, he should discharge his duty to the public, and enter fully into the subject. At the same time, Mr. Rolle, an adherent of the ministers, who distinguished himself greatly by his zeal upon this occasion, declared that the question involved matter by which the constitution, both in church and state, might be essentially affected; and that if the friends of the Prince of Wales persisted in their attempt, it would be necessary to enquire into those circumstances also. What the circumstances so solemnly adverted to by Mr. Pitt in this conversation were, the house was left for the present to conjecture. The menace thrown out by Mr. Rolle was well known to allude to some supposed connection between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert, to whom he had for some time manifested a strong attachment. For, notwithstanding the possibility of a marriage between those two parties was effectually guarded against by the Royal Marriage Act, great pains had been taken, and not entirely without success, to mislead the ignorant, and to inflame the minds of the vulgar, upon that subject;—with what view it would have been more easy to conceive in former times than at present, when all the enemies of the House of Brunswick are supposed to have ceased from amongst the nation. On the 27th of the same month Mr. Newnham, in compliance with the request that had been made, sig-

nified to the house that the motion he intended to make would be to the following effect: "That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, praying him to take into his Royal consideration the present embarrassed state of the affairs of the Prince of Wales, and to grant him such relief as his royal wisdom should think fit; and that the house would make good the same." Several members on both sides of the house having arisen to deprecate the further discussion of this business, and to express their earnest wishes, that it might be accomodated in some other manner,

Mr. Sheridan declared himself impressed with as high a sense of the magnitude and importance of this subject, as any person could possibly be; and considered it perhaps of greater consequence than any other that was ever agitated within these walls: he felt, in common with other members, an extreme degree of reluctance in discussing, as a question, what, if it came from another quarter, could admit of no controversy. But looking to the circumstances, and above all, the proceedings of his Royal Highness under every difficulty; and keeping in mind, at the same time, what was due to the dignity, the honour, and the gratitude of the whole British empire, he would not confine the interest of the question to the country members alone, respectable and highly revered as they ought to be; but he should not hesitate to declare, that every individual of the state, and every member of parliament in particular, was deeply concerned in the subject of the motion. He differed much with those who represented, that alarming consequences of disunion might ensue from the issue of this motion, and that the existence of the church and state were endangered by its agitation. He did not well know what precise meaning to affix to expressions of this kind, but he was very well convinced that the motion which was now made, after every method had failed, originated only in a consciousness of the unparalleled difficulties under which the Heir of the Crown was so long suffered to labour. *They* very much mistook both the conduct and character of what were called the Opposition in this country,

who should hint or imagine that they wished to take any political advantage of differences subsisting between any branches of the royal family ;—on the contrary, there was no circumstance to which they looked forward with more anxiety and zeal, than that the illustrious son should be restored as fully and speedily as possible to the royal arms, and the confidence and affections of his father.

But in addition to the expressions of which he had already taken notice, there was another which he reflected on with very great attention, and which, coming as it did, from the minister on a former day, was the more entitled to serious observation ;—he meant an insinuation that there were circumstances which must come out in the discussion of this question, to shew the impropriety of granting the assistance required. On a suggestion such as this, it would be ridiculous, indeed, for any person to obtrude himself without, at least, sufficient authority ; and for his part he could declare, on the very best and the highest authority, that neither the friends of the Prince, nor his Royal Highness himself, had any other wish, than that every circumstance in the whole series of his conduct should be most minutely and accurately inquired into ; and those who felt most for his situation were ready to meet, and anxious to enter upon, every species of investigation that should be suggested. It was His Royal Highness's decided wish that no part of his conduct, circumstances, or situation, should be treated with ambiguity, concealment, or affected tenderness ; but that whatever related to him should be discussed openly, and with fair, manly, and direct examination. Mr. Sheridan remarked, that he expected that long before this the awkwardness of discussion would have been prevented by relief from another quarter ; and such was the reluctance which he felt in agitating the question in a hostile manner, that, short as the period was between this and the day announced for the motion, he still ex-

pected that something might be done in the way of accommodation, so as to render it unnecessary. Every person was convinced how much the circumstances of the Prince were in need of assistance; and he was much surprized that, feeling as they do, even His Majesty's ministers should not, if necessary, have used their influence long before this to obtain so wished-for an object. Whatever was brought forward (Mr. Sheridan asserted) he knew would meet with an unequivocal and complete reply, such as, he was assured, His Royal Highness would himself give as a peer of Great Britain, were a question of this nature to be agitated in another house. How far such a discussion might be proper, he left to the feeling of the gentleman to whom he alluded to decide.

Mr. Rolle, Mr. Dempster, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Hussey, Mr. Powys, Mr. Drake, and Mr. Alderman Watson, having delivered their sentiments upon the subject,

Mr. Sheridan rose again, and contended, that the respectful manner in which the address to His Majesty would be couched, must do away all apprehensions of jealousy or disunion arising from the subject of the proposed motion. Were any such effects expected, it should have been the duty of ministers to obviate them, by anticipating the purpose of what the alderman intended to submit. Nor was he able to comprehend why the notice of this measure should have produced any alarm amongst the country members, who must be aware that the Prince should not be suffered to continue in such embarrassed circumstances; and that the motion must inevitably come from one quarter or the other. With regard to the mode of the motion being brought forward, he was of opinion that the proposed one was the best which could be adopted;—for as to the amount of his Royal Highness's debts, he believed that this could not well be ascertained, his creditors being so grateful for the liberal man-

ner in which he acted, that they had not yet brought in their accounts. However, the necessity of the case made it indispensable to use some means ; and he would put it to either side of the house, or any individual in it, whether, after what had passed, there was any possibility of the motion been given up. Insinuations had been thrown out in the first instance, and converted into assertions this day, which the honor and feelings of the parties made it necessary to have explained ; and should the gentlemen engaged now recede from the measure, the natural inference would be on the part of the public, that they were afraid of the circumstances which were threatened to be brought against them ; and, not daring to meet the discussion, were at last reduced to forego their motion.

Mr. Sheridan said, some honorable gentlemen had thought proper vehemently to express their anxious wishes that the business should be deferred ; but the right honorable gentleman himself (Mr. Pitt) had erected an insuperable bar to such a measure. He appealed to the right honorable gentleman's own candor, whether that house, whether the country, whether all Europe, could form any other opinion of such behaviour, than that the Prince had yielded to terror what he had denied to argument. What could the world think of such conduct, but that he fled from enquiry, and dared not face his accusers ? But if such was the design of such threats, he believed they would find that the author of them had as much mistaken the feelings, as the conduct of the Prince. With respect to its being supposed that the party with whom Mr. Sheridan had the honor to act, had been guilty of fomenting the unhappy divisions which were conceived to exist in the royal family, he said, that the charge was as false as it was foolish. Such a difference, so far from assisting, must materially injure those who were not admitted into His Majesty's councils, and whose opposition was not founded on

any little personal animosities, but on broad, solid, constitutional grounds.

The Speaker put an end to the question for the present, by calling upon Alderman Newnham to bring up a petition which he had in his hand. Mr. Pitt afterwards renewed the subject, and declared that he had been greatly misunderstood, if it was conceived that he meant to throw out any insinuations injurious to the character of the Prince of Wales. The particulars, to which he alluded, and which he might find it necessary to state fully to the house, related only to his pecuniary affairs, and to a correspondence that had taken place on that subject; and which he thought would satisfy the house of the impropriety of complying with the proposed motion.

Mr. Sheridan said, that he was extremely glad that the right honorable gentleman had explained himself; because, most undoubtedly, as he had left the subject the other day, the interpretation of the right honorable gentleman's declaration had been the very construction which the right honorable gentleman had now so fully cleared himself from having any intention to convey. As to the matter, Mr. Sheridan observed, that he thought any sort of allusion would have been in the extremest degree indelicate and disrespectful. The right honorable gentleman, however, had entirely cleared his mind from any farther conception, that he meant to make any allusion which could have any thing to do but with the pecuniary embarrassments of his Royal Highness.

APRIL 30.

AFFAIRS OF THE PRINCE OF WALES.

Mr. Newnham made a few observations upon what had passed on the 27th. He remarked, that much had been said of the tenderness of the ground upon which he trod, and of the dangerous consequences that might arise from his perseverance. He declared himself totally ignorant of the grounds of those apprehensions, with which others were so unavoidably filled. If there was danger in the measure, let those who gave occasion to it tremble at the consequences. He saw none; the Prince saw none; and it was by his express desire that he now gave notice he should pursue his design. Highly honored, as he conceived himself to be, by the Prince's confidence upon this occasion,

he was not to be intimidated; and he could assure the house, that neither was his Royal Highness to be deterred from his purpose by the base and false rumours which were spread abroad concerning him. Mr. Fox, who had been absent on the former debate, came down this day with immediate authority from the Prince of Wales, to assure the house, there was no part of his conduct that he was either afraid or unwilling to have investigated in the fullest manner. With regard to the private correspondence alluded to, he wished it to be laid before the house, because he could take upon himself to assert, that it would prove the conduct of his Royal Highness to have been in the highest degree amiable, and would present as uniform and perfect a picture of duty and obedience, as ever in any instance had been shewn from a son to his father, or from a subject to his sovereign. With respect to the debt, which was the cause of his present difficulties, the Prince was willing, if the house should deem it necessary, to give a fair and general account, in writing, of every part of it. With regard to allusions made by one member to something full of danger to the church and state, he wished he had spoken more explicitly. If he alluded to a certain low and malicious rumour which had been industriously propagated without doors, he was authorized to declare it to be a falsehood. He thought that a tale, fit only to impose upon the lowest of the vulgar, could not have gained credit for a moment in that house. To this Mr. Rolle replied, that Mr. Fox had said, the fact alluded to was impossible to have happened. They all knew, indeed, that there were certain laws and acts of parliament which forbade it, and made it null and void; but still it might have taken place, though not under the formal sanction of law; and upon that point he wished to be satisfied. Mr. Fox observed, that though what he had said before was, he thought, sufficient to satisfy every candid and liberal mind, he was willing, if possible, to satisfy the most perverse. When he denied the calumny in question, he meant to deny it, not merely with regard to the effect of certain existing laws, but to deny it in toto, in point of fact as well as law. The fact not only never could have happened legally, but never did happen in any way whatsoever; and had, from the beginning, been a base and malicious falsehood. Mr. Rolle rose again, and desired to know whether what Mr. Fox had last said was to be understood as spoken from direct authority. Mr. Fox replied, that he had direct authority.

Mr. SHERIDAN contended, that it would be extremely unhandsome in the honorable gentleman, who had called upon his right honorable friend to say whether he spoke from direct authority or not, to sit silent after having received so explicit an answer.

Mr. Rolle replied, that nothing which the honorable gentleman could say would induce him to act otherwise, than to his judgment

should appear proper. The right honorable gentleman certainly had answered him, and the house would judge for themselves of the propriety of the answer.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that the honorable gentleman, after having put a pointed question, and received an immediate answer, was bound, in honor and fairness, either to declare that he was satisfied, or to take some means of putting the matter into such a state of enquiry as should satisfy him. To remain silent, or to declare that the house would judge for themselves after what had passed, was neither manly nor candid. If, therefore, the honorable gentleman did not choose to say that he was satisfied, the house ought to come to a resolution, that it was seditious and disloyal to propagate reports injurious to the character of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and thus by authority discountenance the report.

Mr. Rolle contended, that it was his affection for the Prince, and his desire he should stand well with the country, which had induced him to state that he had heard reports of a nature injurious to his character. He had not invented those reports, but merely said, that he had heard them, and that they had made an impression on his mind. With a view to ascertain how far they had been founded, he had put the question to the right honorable gentleman, and in so doing, he was persuaded that he had not acted in any unparliamentary manner.

Mr. Pitt declared, that he had never heard so direct an attack upon the freedom of debate and the liberty of speech in that house, since he had sat in parliament. The privilege of forcing injudicious and distressing motions on the house still remained to every gentleman who chose to avail himself of that freedom; and it was extraordinary, indeed, to see an attempt made to restrain other gentlemen who wished to interfere for the purpose of depreciating such motions. The honorable gentleman who took so warm a part in the business on the other side of the house, should rather be obliged to the honorable gentleman who was the first to suggest a question, which had been the means of bringing forward so explicit a declaration on so interesting a subject, and one which must give complete satisfaction, not only to the honorable gentleman himself, but to the whole house.

Mr. Sheridan answered, that most undoubtedly the freedom of debate ought to continue unlimited and unrestrained; and no man could wish more sin-

cerely than he did, that it should; but he must deny that he had said any thing which looked like an infringement of that freedom. An honorable gentleman first threw out an insinuation, that something affecting the safety of church and state was involved in a question about to be brought on relative to the Prince of Wales; that insinuation was met by a direct refutation of the calumny to which the insinuation pointed, coupled with an offer that his Royal Highness was willing to stand up in his place as a peer of parliament, and answer any pointed questions which might be put to him on the subject. The honorable gentleman then desired to know, whether the refutation comes from authority, and he was told explicitly that it did; and then he refused either to say that he was satisfied that his insinuation was unfounded, or to take the most effectual means of discovering whether it was so or not. This, Mr. Sheridan declared, was the fair state of the case; and he would appeal to the house, nay, he would appeal to the candor of the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) himself, whether, under such circumstances, it was honorable, manly, and fair, or candid, for the honorable gentleman to remain silent; and whether he ought not either to declare that he was satisfied, or to resort to means of ascertaining the fact; for it was adding, in a tenfold degree, to the malicious falsehood which had been propagated against his Royal Highness, to say that the Prince had authorized a false denial of the fact. The honorable gentleman, by putting the question to his right honorable friend had, as it were, admitted that a direct answer would satisfy him; and he ought to have said that it did, or not to have put the question. He observed, that the right honorable gentleman had himself been obliged to assume, "that the honorable member must be satisfied," since he had never acknowledged that he was so. He must therefore, repeat, that the house ought to declare,

by a resolution, that it was seditious and disloyal to propagate reports injurious to the character of the Prince of Wales.

MAY 4.

AFFAIRS OF THE PRINCE OF WALES.

The favourable impression which the last debate, from the open and manly conduct of the Prince, and the harshness with which he had been treated in his most private and personal concerns, left upon the minds of men both within and without the doors of parliament, appears to have given the minister a serious apprehension, that upon the question itself he might be left in a minority; for the next day's overtures were made to his Royal Highness to bring the business to a private accommodation. On Thursday, the 3d of May, Mr. Pitt had an audience at Carlton House; and the same night the Prince was informed by His Majesty's command, in general terms, that if the motion intended to be made the next day in the house of commons should be withdrawn, every thing might be settled to his Royal Highness's satisfaction. Accordingly on this day, the 4th of May, Mr. Newnham being in his place in the house, in which upwards of four hundred members were assembled; he rose and said he felt the highest satisfaction in being able to inform the house, that his intended motion was no longer necessary. Several members joined in expressing in the warmest terms, the great satisfaction this information gave them.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that he did not dissent from the right honorable gentleman's (Mr. Pitt's) wish, that the conversation should not be prolonged. He did not, however, conceive that the necessity for abridging it, could arise from any apprehension that it could terminate in altercation, or difference of opinion. He could not but believe, that upon that day there existed but one feeling, and one sentiment in the house—that of a heart-felt satisfaction at the auspicious conclusion to which the business was understood to be brought. He would not enter into the distinctions which the right honorable gentleman had attempted to make;—if it was meant to be insinuated that the merit of this presumed reconciliation belonging exclusively to His Majesty's ministers, be it so. The gentlemen who were sup-

posed to be admitted to the honor of His Royal Highness's confidence, would convince them of their sincere anxiety that that end should be obtained, by waving every claim to credit, with regard to the means. In truth, the measures which had been adopted were the result of His Royal Highness's own judgment, which none but those who did not know him, could consider as needing the aid of any other person's council.

Mr. Sheridan wished it however to be understood, that though His Royal Highness felt the most perfect satisfaction at the prospect before him, in which he was convinced that the idea of relief from pecuniary embarrassment, farther than it gratified the just and honorable feelings of his royal mind towards others, had the least share ; yet did he also desire it to be distinctly remembered, that no attempt had at any time been made to screen any part of his conduct, actions, or situation, from their view ; and that he had even offered to answer himself any question which could be put to him. That no such idea had been pursued, and that no such enquiry had been adopted, was a point which did credit to the decorum, the feelings, and the dignity of parliament ; but whilst His Royal Highness's feelings had no doubt been considered on this occasion, he must take the liberty of saying, however some might think it a subordinate consideration, that there was another person intitled, in every delicate and honorable mind, to the same attention ;—one whom he would not otherwise venture to describe or allude to, but by saying it was a name which malice or ignorance alone could attempt to injure, and whose conduct and character claimed, and were entitled to the truest respect.

The order of the day was read, for the house to resolve itself into a committee upon the bill, authorising the forming of the

TAX UPON POST HORSES ;

and upon the Speaker putting the question, "that he leave the chair,"

Mr. Sheridan observed, that he would not detain the house two minutes; but as he had happened to be otherwise engaged, and not able to attend his duty in that house, when the bill was last debated, he thought it necessary to say, that he should take the opportunity of delivering his sentiments against the bill at the next proper stage of it—at the third reading. For the present, as he considered the bill totally unfit to pass, he should take the sense of the house against the Speaker's leaving the chair.

The house accordingly divided; ayes 147; noes 100.

MAY 15.

ABUSES IN THE POST OFFICE.

*Mr. Grey moved, that a committee be appointed, to enquire into certain abuses in the post-office, and which had come to his knowledge in consequence of the dismissal of a noble relative of his, the Earl of Tankerville, from the office of Joint Post Master General; and which were not likely to be remedied otherwise than by parliamentary enquiry, as the part taken by the minister in the business would clearly prove. The several facts upon which this accusation was founded, as they afterwards appeared confirmed by the report of the committee appointed to enquire thereinto, were as follow.—First, that in 1775, Mr. Lees, on receiving an appointment to be Secretary to the post office in Ireland, entered into security to pay the sum of 350*l.* a year out of the profits of that office to a person described by the letters A. B., but whose real name when the Earl of Tankerville first attempted to examine into this transaction, Mr. Lees considered himself bound to conceal. It afterwards appeared, that this person was a Mr. Treves, an intimate friend of Lord Carteret, who was at the time of the above appointment, Joint Post Master General with Lord le Despenser, and privy to the whole transaction. It appeared from the evidence of Mr. Todd, secretary to the post-office, that Lord Carteret was greatly displeased and disquieted by the discovery of this business; and that he, Mr. Todd, had at the time, expressed his disapprobation of it to both Post Masters General.—Secondly, it appeared, that the payment of an annuity of 200*l.* had been exacted from a Mr. Dashwood, appointed Postmaster-General of Jamaica, as the condition of his appointment; and had been regularly paid by him to Mr. Treves; and that the said Mr. Treves had never performed any public service in the post-office, or in any other public department, to entitle him to any public reward.—Thirdly, Mr. Molyneux, agent to the packets at Helvoetsluys, had been permitted,*

with the knowledge of Lord Carteret, to dispose of that office to a Mr. Hutchinson for a sum of money ; and it appeared, that complaints had been made against the said Mr. Hutchinson for misconduct in his office.—Fourthly, it appeared, that none of these transactions were entered in the books of the office, but on the contrary had been kept concealed.—Fifthly, an undue preference had been shewn to a Mr. Staunton, Postmaster-General at Isleworth, whose place was worth 400l. ; in addition to which, he was appointed Comptroller of the bye and cross-road letter office, to which a salary of 500l. a year, and the perquisites of coals and candles are attached ; and 100l. was afterwards granted him in lieu of a house.—Sixthly, various and extraordinary abuses were stated to exist in the management of the packet boats, particularly that no deduction had been made from the hire of any vessels whilst under repair, seizure for smuggling, or when unemployed ; and that they were frequently for many months together in that situation.—Seventhly, the undue receipt of perquisites and incidents, particularly in coals, candles, tin ware, and various articles of furniture, by the Postmasters-General, and others having appointments in the post-office, were stated as being shameful and excessive.—Lastly, to bring these matters home to the minister, it was stated by Mr. Grey, that Lord Tankerville, whilst in office, had busied himself attentively in endeavouring to convict the abuses in question : had suggested several plans for their prevention in future : and had communicated those plans to the Chancellor of the Exchequer ;—that he had received great commendation for his zeal and attention, and had been promised support, but that his colleague, Lord Carteret, not viewing these abuses in the same criminal light that he did ; and refusing to concur in the necessary steps for preventing them, a quarrel had ensued between the two noble Lords, and it became impossible that they should continue Joint-Postmasters-General any longer. This being the fact, an ordinary observer, he said, would have imagined that the right honorable gentleman would not have dismissed the Postmaster-General who had shewn himself anxious for a reform, and had taken so much pains to effect it ; but the other Postmaster-General, who was the protector of the abuses in question, and the opposer of the necessary reform. Instead, however, of dismissing Lord Carteret, the right honorable gentleman had suddenly dismissed his noble relation.

Viscount Maitland observed, that the present motion, upon the face of it, seemed to arise rather from resentment, than justice ; it looked as if it were founded in pique ; and with a view to keep the noble Lord, now at the head of the post-office, in a very disagreeable predicament, by calling his character in question ; and not allowing him, owing to the lateness of the session, an immediate opportunity of clearing it from all imputation.

Mr. SHERIDAN, defending Mr. Grey's conduct from the construction which Viscount Maitland had put upon it, observed, that it was possible some other influence had induced the noble viscount to

stand up so warm an advocate for the present Postmaster-General, than his own conviction, that his honorable friend meant any thing at all unfair in bringing forward his motion at that advanced period of the session. The fact Mr. Sheridan asserted to be this :—the Earl of Tankerville had himself intended, as was well known, to take some step in the house of lords relative to the subjects stated by his honorable friend in his opening ; nor was it till very lately that he had been informed that the only effectual and proper proceeding would be, to move in that house for a committee of inquiry. His honorable friend, therefore, was not at all to blame for not having brought forward the subject sooner, since it had not been in his hands till within a few days. The most material part of the proposed inquiry was the charge against a right honorable gentleman, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. That matter was certainly a serious ground of enquiry, because no man in that house dealt more in professions ; but he wished to try the right honorable gentleman by his conduct, and not by his professions, or the preambles of the bills which he had proposed and got passed. The right honorable gentleman had just turned to one of those bills—his office reform bill, passed more than two years ago ; and yet that house had heard nothing of the effects of that bill as to the abuses in the post-office, to which the right honorable gentleman had said it alluded. He had at the time when the bill was in agitation, stood up to oppose it, and pronounced that it would prove ineffectual ; and that the same end might be better obtained by other and very different means. The motion of his honorable friend, and the ground of it, sufficiently proved that assertion, and amply justified it.

Mr. Pitt asserted, that he verily believed, that Mr. Sheridan had spoken with his usual sincerity, when he said that the charge against the Chancellor of the Exchequer was the material part of the topics alluded to by the honorable gentleman ; and he did not at all doubt, but that when it was considered what use ingenuity might make of

reports to disseminate stories and tales to his prejudice, that the opportunity of doing so was the principal ground which induced gentlemen to be so anxious for the enquiry.

Mr. Sheridan answered, that as the right honorable gentleman had spoken three times, he hoped he should be indulged in speaking a second time. The right honorable gentleman had, it seems, thought him ironical in saying that the most material part of the charge was that against the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Pitt said, across the table, directly the reverse; in that I admit, and believe you to be sincere.

Mr. Sheridan resumed his speech, and said, "Well, I am glad the right honorable gentleman admits that I generally speak with sincerity."

No, said Mr. Pitt again, not so; but in what you have this day said against me.

Mr. Sheridan again rallied, and went into argument to prove, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer dealt more in professions than in acts. The right honorable gentleman, he observed, had said that the commissioners, under the office-reform bill, had not come to the post-office. He asked, then, to what else had they turned their attention? He reminded the right honorable gentleman of his eagerness to triumph over a noble lord (North) by his famous speech on whipcord, the kitchens of Downing-street house, and a variety of other trifling topics, which, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had stated as instances of the noble lord's negligence and corruption. He dwelt upon Mr. Pitt's former argument about the kitchens, and asked how the right honorable gentleman could reconcile it to himself to have built the palace at the corner of the Admiralty, after having maintained such an argument? It was, if not a proof of corruption, at least a proof of profusion, and unnecessary waste of the public money, in the right honorable gentleman. Again, if he could not be charged with a direct corrupt use of the influence of the crown, he had made as prudent and

as interesting an use of it as any minister, in the distribution of places and emoluments, and particularly in bestowing titles and honors. Upon the whole, Mr. Sheridan contended, that Mr. Pitt had always promised and professed purity; but had acted with as much self-attention, and as much neglect of reform as any minister whatever.

Some expressions having fallen from Mr. Pitt, which Mr. Grey considered as reflecting injuriously upon the motives, which had led him to undertake the present enquiry, the latter rose with great warmth, and said, that conscious as he was of being actuated by fair and honorable considerations, no man should dare to impute unworthy motives to him.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt, and Mr. Sheridan rose together; but the latter declaring that he flattered himself the house would wish rather, in such a moment, that he should delay the right honorable gentleman's speaking for a very few seconds, was heard first. Mr. Sheridan then said, his honorable friend, he saw clearly, had mistaken the Chancellor of the Exchequer's meaning; but his words hastily heard, might, at their first sound, have made the sort of impression which he perceived they had made on his honorable friend; though he was ready to admit that this was not their true meaning.

At length the speaker put the question and it was carried.

MAY 28.

ABUSES IN THE POST-OFFICE.

On the 23d May, the report was brought up from the committee. A motion for printing it was rejected; and it was ordered to be taken into consideration on the 28th. On the latter day, Mr. Grey observed, that the accuracy of the report of the committee, rendered it unnecessary for him to trouble the house with a minute detail of the subject of their investigation. Entertaining, therefore, no doubt but the facts he had stated would appear fully proved; it was for the house to consider—first, the nature of the offence; and, secondly, the degree of censure or punishment it deserved. For his part, he considered the Chancellor of the Exchequer as the person the most culpable in the whole business. He concluded with moving, that it

appears to this house that great abuses have prevailed in the Post-office; and that the same being made known to His Majesty's ministers, it is their duty, without loss of time, to make use of such measures as are in their power to reform them."

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that it was extremely natural for the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt,) notwithstanding his concern for Lord Carteret, to take notice of that part of his honorable friend's speech first, which more immediately related to himself. The right honorable gentleman had, with great apparent firmness, animadverted upon what his honorable friend had said; but the right honorable gentleman must excuse him, if he did not give entire credit to the manner of his answer; but on the contrary, took the liberty of asserting that the right honorable gentleman did feel, and severely feel the reprehension of his honorable friend. With regard to the words which the right honorable gentleman had quoted of his honorable friend's first speech in that house, the right honorable gentleman had not quoted his honorable friend correctly; for, if he had, the house would have seen that his honorable friend was by no means chargeable with inconsistency. His honorable friend had not professed personal respect to the right honorable gentleman; but only said, he gave him credit for the goodness of his intention, in the measures which he brought forward, and, therefore, he hoped the right honorable gentleman would give him credit, when he asserted, that in opposing the measure, at that time under consideration, (the commercial treaty with France) that his motive was honest. This was, (Mr. Sheridan said) a true description of what had then passed. With regard to any thing which his honorable friend had said, that might be improper; when he considered the talents and the ability his honorable friend had shewn at his outset, and ever since, though he must, undoubtedly, be called a young member; yet he would agree with the

right honorable gentleman, that such a young member, was as little pardonable for any error, as the oldest member of the house. On the present occasion, however, he must contend that his honorable friend had not merited the reproof, which the right honorable gentleman, the veteran statesman of four years experience—the Nestor of twenty-five, had been pleased to bestow on him. Mr. Sheridan now proceeded to the main question; and reminded the house, he had opposed the bill, called the office-fee-reform bill, when originally brought in, as a bill of ostentation and parade; rather than a bill likely to prove of solid advantage and utility; and he was now convinced it had been what he then described it to be; since it appeared, from what the honorable gentleman near him, (Mr. Baring) he said, the commissioners had begun at the wrong end, and gone in search of abuses, where no abuses could have existed. The honorable gentleman had said, the commissioners went first into the office of the Old Board of Trade;—a curious beginning—to search what abuses had been formerly practised in an office which no longer existed!—They had next gone into the Secretary of State's offices; the offices of all others least likely to be pregnant with abuses. If any abuse was there, it was, that the deputy Secretary of State, whose duty was arduous and important, were by no means sufficiently paid. But it was in vain to say what the commissioners had done, since the honorable gentleman confessed himself unfit to be a commissioner; for, he had expressly told the house, it had cost him more trouble to write a single line of a report, than it would take him to pen an entire report of the commissioners of accounts. The right honorable gentleman's bill (Mr. Sheridan said) he had never considered as an exclusion of all future inquiry; and yet, from the right honorable gentleman's argument of that day, he seemed so to regard it;

for, notwithstanding that the facts stated in the opening of the present subject, by his honorable friend, had all of them been substantiated and established by evidence; yet, the right honorable gentleman was for leaving them for the correction of the commissioners, when they should have leisure to attend tot hem. It appeared, indeed, the right honorable gentleman had surrendered his understanding when he brought in the bill; and was determined to hear only with Mr. Baring's ears, and to see with the eyes of Sir John Dick; and, therefore, he could not pay the least attention to the representations of the noble Earl of Tankerville. But as he did not accuse the commissioners of celerity—for they had hitherto moved as slowly as the old mails—he wished they would step to the Post-office, where probably they might be benefitted by Mr. Palmer's accelerating plan. Mr. Sheridan read a clause from the bill, to shew that the transactions relative to the 350l. and the 200l. as well as the affair of the agency to the Helvoetfluyts packets, came directly within the meaning of the clause; declaring, any person or persons guilty of such practices, should be incapable of serving His Majesty in any civil capacity in future. The right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) appeared to plume himself upon his political connections with a noble Lord (Hawkesbury) and sacrificing to these, he had dismissed from office the noble Earl of Tankerville, and retained the noble Lord (Carteret,) although by the office-fee bill, if it had passed into a law, the latter, on the present charge being proved, must have been disqualified from holding any office under government. But this was done to reward Mr. Jenkinson's public services,—secret services, and services in that house. Indeed, his many eminent services could not be forgotten by the right honorable gentleman, as on a very recent occasion, he overturned his own favorite measure, by destroy-

ing the Irish propositions. This was one of the secret services for which he had so meritoriously received a recompence.

Lord Maitland, who undertook the defence of the Post-office, had early in the debate moved the previous question; which being carried, his lordship made a motion, "that the farther consideration of the report be adjourned to that day three months. This was likewise carried.

REFORM OF THE ROYAL BOROUGHES IN SCOTLAND.

Mr. Sheridan now begged leave to call the attention of the house to the motion, which he had several days before promised, concerning the internal reform of the royal boroughs of Scotland. He would not, at this late period of the session, enter deeply into the subject; as the gentlemen entrusted with the direction of the new system for the better government of the boroughs, had no idea of its being fully canvassed previously to the next session of parliament. All that he, therefore, meant to propose was, for leave to present to the house the various petitions in favour of the measure. That which he held in his hand, was from the inhabitants of the city of Glasgow; containing nearly 1,500 signatures of men, in every view, of the highest respectability and independence. He, however, was sorry to observe, that he had been informed, from authority, that the prayer of the petitioners could not, according to the regulations of the house, be considered, this session of parliament; the time of receiving private petitions having expired, and this being supposed to come under that description. Although he very much respected the source of intelligence from whence this opinion was derived; yet, he was free to say, that a petition, containing the signatures of such a numerous class of men, certainly could not, strictly speaking, be considered as a private petition; but was, in every sense of the word, a *public* petition; and, consequently demanded the

attention of parliament. He read an extract from it, which stated the great hardships which the petitioners, and the people of Scotland, suffered, from the present corrupt government of the royal boroughs; particularly so far as related to the management of the revenue;—that acts of enormity and peculation existed;—and that the petitioners prayed that the house would take the subject into consideration, and enact such a salutary reform, as to them, in their wisdom, should seem necessary. Mr. Sheridan concluded, by moving for leave to present the petition.

The Speaker, considering it in the light of a private petition, gave his opinion against the motion. Mr. Fox supported it; and said he considered the petition of as public and universal a nature, as any which had ever been presented. Mr. Dundas moved, "that the house should now adjourn." Mr. Anstruther was surprised, that the matter had not sooner been brought forward; he being informed that many of the gentlemen had been several months in town.

Mr. Sheridan defended the conduct of the gentlemen who officiated as delegates from Scotland. He declared, that their attention to the trust reposed in them by their countrymen, deserved the highest panegyric; as he never saw any description of men more sincerely, or more warmly, bent upon the particular object of their pursuit. Previous to their residence in London, they had shown the most active attachment to the laudable plan which had been brought forward; and, although they had been several weeks in town, their time was strictly occupied in the duties incumbent upon them. They had visited, and solicited, all the representatives from their own country; who had, to a man, rejected their proffers; refusing to countenance a reform, which militated so essentially against the interest of their constituents. The gentlemen aluded to were not, however, discouraged; but proceeded with that manly perseverance and fortitude, which should always command success. If the question of adjournment was now carried, he pro-

mised that the business should be resumed, as early as possible, next session of parliament.

Mr. Dundas's question of adjournment was carried.

DECEMBER 11.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

**On the 19th of April, Mr. Francis opened the charge relative to the revenues of Bengal. He took this occasion of vindicating his character against certain malicious insinuations, which had been industriously circulated both within and without the house; and to the effects of which he attributed the rejection of his name, in the appointment of the committee. Mr. Francis was answered by Major Scott. After other members had spoken, the question was put, and the committee divided—ayes 71; noes 55. On the 25th of April, Mr. Burke brought up from the secret committee the articles of impeachment; which being read a first time, were ordered to be printed, and to be taken into consideration on the 9th of May. Upon the latter day, after much discussion, the house divided on the question, whether the report “should be now read a second time?” which was carried in the affirmative, by 175 to 89. After which, the first article of impeachment was read, and agreed to without a division; and the rest deferred till the morrow, when they were read, amended, and agreed to. Mr. Burke then rose, and moved, “That Warren Hastings, esq. be impeached of high crimes and misdemeanors upon the said articles.” The question was put, and carried. Mr. Frederick Montagu next rose, and moved, “That Mr. Burke, in the name of the house of commons, and of all the commons of Great Britain, do go to the bar of the house of lords, and impeach Warren Hastings, esquire, late governor-general of Bengal, of high crimes and misdemeanors; and do acquaint the lords, that the commons will, with all convenient speed, exhibit articles against him, and make good the same.” The motion being agreed to, the majority of the house immediately attended Mr. Burke to the bar of the house of peers; where Mr. Burke solemnly impeached Mr. Hastings in the form above-recited. On the 11th, Mr. Burke reported to the house, that he had been at the bar of the house of lords, and had impeached Mr. Hastings, in obedience to their commands. He then moved, that the message from the lords, appointing a day for the trial of Mr. Hastings, be read; which was done accordingly. He next moved, “that managers be appointed to make good the articles of impeachment against Warren Hastings, esquire; and that the committee, to whom it was referred to consider the defence of Warren Hastings, be the said managers.*

** Abstract of proceedings continued from that under the head of April 3.*

"That Messrs. Wallis and Troward be the solicitors for the impeachment."

"That this house will attend the trial of Warren Hastings, as a committee of the whole house."

Which motions, upon being severally put, were unanimously agreed to. Mr. Fox afterwards moved, "that the name of Mr. Francis be added to the committee." Mr. Pitt opposed it.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, that he had frequently had occasion to admire the admirable talents of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) who spoke last. His address and management were the constant objects of his envy. His forward and enterprising qualities, which he had so eminently displayed at one time, could not be equalled by his prudence and discretion at another. His prudence, however, had never been more conspicuously proved than on that evening; for his prudence had wisely prevented him from undertaking the task of answering two of the most eloquent speeches he had ever heard. But the right honorable gentleman, though he found it indiscreet to attempt to answer the honorable mover and seconder of the motion, had been so good as to entertain them with a new discovery. He had discovered that *this* was not a question of argument, but of feeling. A new system of proceeding and discussion, seemed to have taken place in that house; and every topic that occurred, was to be resolved into two general heads. If any inquiry was to be urged on any ground of unexplained expense, or of alarming and offensive projects, it was instantly to be supported by confidence in the minister. If any question was agitated, in which the minister was not personally interested, then it was to be resisted on the ground of feeling—and thus to harmonize the house of commons, and to put an end to all argument and contention; their whole proceedings were to be divided between, and conducted by, confidence and feeling. It was not, however, difficult to draw within a narrow compass, the true state of this question. When

Mr. Francis first arrived from India, there might be some difficulty as to the part he was to take; whether it should be the manly and open part of an accuser, coming forward with his own person, and standing responsible for the accusations he made; or whether he should shrink from the duty which he owed his country, and conceal the important truths of which he had the fullest knowledge. The course to take, in this case, was easy to be settled in the mind of a manly character; and there was nothing in the whole tenor of the relative situation in which he and Mr. Hastings stood in India, that ought to have prevented him from thus coming forward. What was it but a continued state of opposition on the part of inflexible integrity to corruption—of conscientious discharge of duty, to an interested violation of orders?—and what was it to the purpose that this opposition produced a personal contest? That contest was the slightest mark of the opposition which had passed between them. At length, however, it was indirectly inferred that the honorable gentleman (Mr. Francis) might with delicacy furnish assistance in the dark;—he might act under covert, and give them sly and secret aid; but if he stood fairly and handsomely forward, and avowed the information which he gave, then a certain undescribed and equivocal feeling was to be outraged.

The question being put, the house divided—ayes 62; noes 122.

DECEMBER 18.

ORDNANCE ESTIMATES.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that he meant not to take up much of the time of the house; but he had an intention of making several motions; which he hoped would not meet with any objection. The subjects of his motions were the ordnance estimates, which had been moved at so late an hour of the

night on the preceding Monday, that it was impossible for him then to go into any sort of investigation of them; and having been moved in so extraordinary a manner, it was not to be wondered at, that he and other gentlemen had not come down the next day to examine the estimates; or, that the report of the committee had passed without a single observation. It might, he was aware, be said, that any reference to the ordnance estimates was, for the reasons he had stated, out of time; but, as he meant not to press his motions upon the house, if they should be at all objected to; and wished to have them agreed to—rather for the purpose of laying the ground for future discussion, than with any relation to present debate—he hoped it would be allowed, that it was right to make them prior to the recess. One great object of future discussion was, a matter that had been mentioned in the debate on Monday last, when the army and ordnance estimates had been voted; and this was, the total of the estimate of the expense of the system of fortification in the West Indies about to be adopted. It was undoubtedly material for that house to know what the estimate of the whole expense was, previous to the system's having full parliamentary sanction; because, the case might happen, that works to a very large extent might be raised; and it might afterwards be said to that house, "The three thousand men, that you voted last year, was not the full augmentation necessary for the West Indies;—our works, already erected, require so many more to man them;—and you must either vote the full necessary complement, or you weaken the islands, and strengthen the enemy, by putting them in easy possession of works which we cannot defend and maintain." In that view of the consequence, therefore, it was impossible to say to what extent, or to what expense, the works might be carried; or how it might affect the resources of the country, both in regard to men and money. Mr. Sheridan

said, he held in his hand a paper, which he deemed a valuable document; it was a report of the Board of Ordnance, as to the intended plan of fortifications to be erected, and other projects conceived necessary to be adopted; dated 1783, and signed Richmond. In that paper, the noble duke had stated the suspicions that the conduct of the Board of Ordnance had long been liable to; and with a view to put an end to them, had, in an open and manly way, avowed his designs with regard to future works and future plans, and submitted them to the consideration of parliament. That paper Mr. Sheridan thought highly deserving the notice of the house; as it contained the noble duke's own account of his intentions, and was, therefore a proper subject of reference, whenever an ordnance estimate was laid upon the table, during the time the noble Duke should continue to hold his office of Master General of the Ordnance. In that report, the house would see, that his Grace suggested that system of fortification, both at home and abroad, which had, in the first instance, been agitated and discussed in that house; and so much to the honor of the Speaker, been decided against by the effect of his vote. The present proposal, of fortifying the West Indies, was a part of the plan already exploded and rejected in that house; and not, as the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had declared, a new idea, arising out of new circumstances. In order, therefore, to rouse the house to a due attention of the importance of the consideration, Mr. Sheridan said, he should move for an estimate of the whole expense of the intended plan of fortifying the West India islands.

Another matter, also, which he should make a motion upon, was a charge in the estimate of 10,000*l.* for the purchase of some powder mills, at Waltham Abbey; a project, in every point of view, absurd and impolitic, as it tended to annihilate the manufacture of gunpowder in this country,

and to substitute in its stead an unfair monopoly, vested in the hands of government only. The mischiefs of such a scheme, were obvious and ascertainable, from the experience of the royal powder mills at Feversham; where the expense of the establishment had been so great, that every pound of powder cost government four times as much as they could purchase it for from other manufacturers.

A farther subject of motion, was, a proposition that had already challenged and excited the attention of that house:—the raising a corps of artificers, consisting of six hundred men, and dividing them into six companies. A more unprincipled plan he had never seen suggested; and, when he used the term *unprincipled*, he said he did not mean to apply it in the bad sense of the word, but as marking a plan, not found in any sound or rational principle; for such he took the plan in question to be. In order to prove this assertion, Mr. Sheridan read a sentence from the Duke of Richmond's report of 1783; in which his grace had stated that, from suffering some of the artificers at Woolwich, Sheerness, &c. to be put into companies, the artillery would never want artificers; and a saving of 15,000*l.* would be made to government. Before, therefore, any new plan of raising a new corps of artificers was adopted, Mr. Sheridan declared, it was necessary to know what the saving made, in consequence of the noble duke's plan of 1783, amounted to; because, if no such saving, as was stated in the report in his hand, had been made, the present proposition of raising a corps of artificers—instead of being economical—would, in fact be an additional expense upon the public. Mr. Sheridan next descanted on the idle use of the word *œconomy*, and contended, that under that cover and pretence, the noble duke had considerably increased the patronage and influence of the Board of Ordnance; both of which, when

first chosen Master General, he professed it to be his main object to curtail and diminish. He ridiculed the idea of putting artificers under martial law, and subjecting them to military discipline; declaring it was absurd in the extreme to suppose that men capable of earning half-a-crown, or three shillings a day, would enlist as soldiers, and work in their respective occupations for a third of the money, or less; for, who could expect that carpenters should give up their freedom, and their better wages, for the mere *douceur* of military discipline? The result, if the wild project were adopted, would only be, that we should have soldiers without discipline, and workmen without skill.

Mr. Sheridan next called the attention of the house to the charge for the works at Cumberland Fort; and declared he almost repented the vote he had given against the noble Duke's general system of fortification of the dock yards, debated and discussed three or four years ago; because from what he had since seen, he had every reason to think the noble Duke believed, in his conscience, the system ought to be adopted; and he (Mr. Sheridan) in his conscience believed, it would ultimately be adopted; and he declared, he had much rather the house should openly and knowingly adopt a bad precedent, than have a bad precedent foisted upon them indirectly, and against their consent. Mr. Sheridan observed, upon the various subjects he had mentioned, frequently adverting to the Duke of Richmond's Report of 1783; and having read the motion he meant to make on each, he concluded with moving for

“An estimate of the expense of completing the fortifications intended in the West Indies; distinguishing the sums proposed to be allotted for the defence of each island, with an account of the number of troops necessary to garrison the whole.

*Mr. Chancellor Pitt answered, that the honorable gentleman had unfortunately moved, in the first instance, what he must necessarily object to; whereas, to most of the other motions that he had opened, he did not see the smallest ground of objection. With regard to the estimates of the whole amount of the fortifications intended for the West India Islands, he had stated to the house, in a late debate, that an estimate of the total expense could not, from the nature of things, be made up at present; but that from what he knew of the subject, he conjectured that it would amount to a sum as large as 180,000*l.* and not exceeding 200,000*l.* He could give no other answer then, and as he knew that a complete estimate could not be made out, he must necessarily resist a motion which could not possibly be complied with.*

Mr. Sheridan, with the consent of the house, withdrew the motion. He then severally moved for

“An account of the application of the money voted for the ordnance the last four years.”

“An account of the savings by employing part of the Royal Regiment of Artillery as artificers.”

“A copy of the King’s warrant for raising the corps of artificers.”

“A copy of the agreement for Waltham Abbey powder mills.”

“An account of the establishment of the royal powder mills at Feversham.”

“An account of the different articles supplied for Ordnance.”

“An account of the Civil Establishment.”

“An estimate of Cumberland Fort.” And,

“An account of the convicts employed.”

These motions were all carried.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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